JULY 2023

ABC

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TV SHOW FRIDAY 7.30PM

## Hedging heroes

10 SHRUBS FOR STYLE & STRUCTURE

## 40+

plant profiles to dig into

## Perfect plants for SHADY SPOTS

## Teen spirit

A 16-YEAR-OLD GREEN THUMB

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# welcome

It's always interesting to observe your garden's responses to the shifts in temperature as the seasons change. I love watching the gentle jostling for attention, as different plants rise to the occasion and recognise it's their time to shine, while others take a quiet back seat.

This issue, we're celebrating the plants with winter wow. While other species enter their dormant period, these plants are preparing for showtime – and what gorgeous displays they offer. Hellebores are a crowd pleaser, of course, and we couldn't resist putting them on the cover to greet you this month. But there are many other gorgeous bloomers at this time of year, including Aussie natives such as the 'Silver Princess' eucalypt (May Gibbs must surely have been thinking of this tree when she conjured Snugglepot, Cuddlepie and the gumnut babies?). Our horticultural editor, AB Bishop surveys a dozen of the stunners putting on a show at this time of year, with plants relevant to cool temperate through to tropical and arid climate zones, starting on page 30.

Among the plants flowering at this time is a little native called *Chorizema cordatum* (the heart-leaf flame pea), which has won the hearts of everyone on the magazine team this month. It's a petite scrambling grower, but its unassuming demeanour is offset with flowers in bright orange and hot pink. What a colour combo! Chloe Foster writes about it on page 26. And if, like me, you enjoy reading about plants that exist well outside the familiar, then you'll love Claire Bickle's story on the lipstick tree. A warm-climate plant, it's a multi-talented beauty with sweet purple blooms and extraordinary heart-shaped fruit – *and* it's the source of an orange-red food dye called annatto (*page 28*).

We're also showcasing plants that not only look good, but serve invaluable roles in your garden. Need a plant that copes with a shaded and root-filled position under trees? Judy Horton suggests some handy and hardy plants – groundcovers, shrubs and strappy plants – that are perfect for that purpose (*page 54*). Seeking a hedging plant to help screen or delineate your garden? There's a shrub for the job (see Roger Fox's recommendations on page 20). The key, of course, is to choose species that will suit your climate and your site.

And if you're looking for an example of a cool-climate garden that's living its best life, you'll find a masterclass from plantsman Stephen Ryan and his partner, Craig Lidgerwood, who have created a garden for all seasons – one that looks as strong in winter as it does in spring, for very different reasons (*page 36*).

I hope this issue inspires you to discover – or rediscover – a plant that finds a place in your heart and garden.

Until next month, happy gardening.

Liz **Elizabeth Wilson**

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**JULY 2023**

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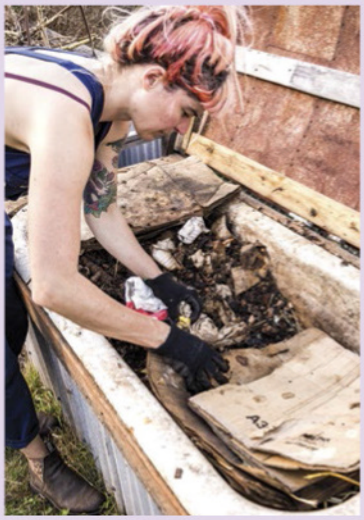
For all your top jobs in the garden this month, turn to page 75



## ON THE COVER

JULY 2023
ABC
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Hedging heroes
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• STEPHEN RYAN'S GORGEOUS GARDEN • 50+ WINTER CARE TIPS

It's time for hellebores and other winter-flowering wonders to shine! Check them out on page 30. **Photo: GAP Photos/ Clive Nichols**

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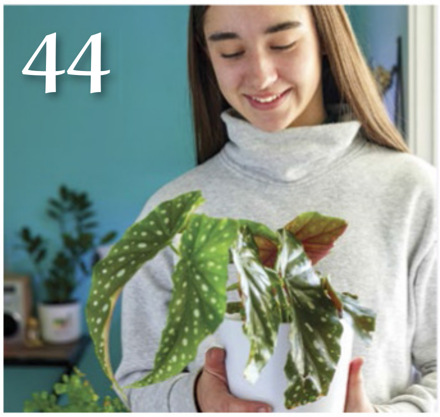
**PHOTOS** VIRGINIA CUMMINS, ISTOCK, NATALIE MENDHAM

# JULY



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ABC *Gardening Australia* magazine acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians and traditional custodians of the lands where we live and work.

**PHOTOS** PLANTS MANAGEMENT AUSTRALIA, ROBERT FRITH/ACORN PHOTO, ALAMY, WILLOW CREATIVE, ISTOCK, SHUTTERSTOCK

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ISSN: 1325-1465

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# July

News and happenings for gardeners and nature lovers

## BEAUTY PAGEANT

Each year, devoted dahlia growers present their best blooms for judging at the Queensland Dahlia Society Show. When photographer Kara Rosenlund visited this year's show, she was so fascinated by the variety of colour and form on display – some "plump and round", others with "frilly blades" – she set up a studio on site to take portraits of the flowers. She has now released a limited-edition print collection, 'Best in Show', depicting 10 dahlia cultivars, with each portrait assigned a name (pictured is *Mavis*, a cactus dahlia). View the collection from June 17 to July 1 at Forman Art & Framing, Burwood, Victoria, or at **kararosenlund.com** ►

**TEXT** SALLY FELDMAN, ELIZABETH WILSON **PHOTO** KARA ROSENLUND

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## TRUNK CALL

It's time to brush off your garden gloves and get ready for Planet Ark's community tree-planting extravaganzas – Schools Tree Day on July 28, and National Tree Day, July 30. Some 300,000 people do just that each year, with more than 26 million trees planted around Australia so far by schools, councils, community groups and individuals. Tropical tree lovers have their own event, too – Tropical Tree Day is December 3. **planetark.org**

## all about orchids

**A long weekend of beautiful cymbidiums kicks off on Friday July 28 at the 2023 State Winter Cymbidium Orchid Show in Perth, Western Australia. Visitors can peruse the displays, watch potting demos or, for a small fee, have their own plants re-potted, and try their luck in the daily raffles.**

**ezi-gro.com.au**

PHOTOS ISTOCK

## NORTHERN EXPO-SURE

The Queensland Garden Expo is on again, running July 7–9 at Nambour Showgrounds on the Sunshine Coast. More than 360 exhibitors will be there, offering 50,000 plants for sale, and free demos and lectures. Highlights include a Giant Kitchen Garden and the Australian Floral Art Association's national floral design competition. Also look out for our very own 'Patch' maestro, Phil Dudman, who'll be there along with ABC *Gardening Australia* favourites Costa Georgiadis, Sophie Thomson, Jerry Coleby-Williams and Millie Ross. **qldgardenexpo.com.au** ►

*Say hello* to us at the *Gardening Australia* magazine stand, where you can sign up for (or renew) your subscription and receive a bonus goodie bag!

## heritage horticulture

It's 200 years since a small collection of camellias was planted in New South Wales by Charles Fraser, the first superintendent of the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney. Among them were *Camellia japonica*, including 'Rubra Plena', and tea plants (*C. sinensis*). To celebrate this horticultural milestone, Foundation and Friends of the Botanic Gardens is hosting a program of seminars, as well as guided tours, a tea ceremony and afternoon tea, at the Royal Botanic Garden on July 12, in collaboration with Camellia Ark Australia, which works to conserve Australia's most rare camellia collections. **rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au**

## FLORAL TRIBUTE

Alanna Chant, a flora conservation officer in Western Australia's Mid West, has been honoured for 30 years of service, with a newly discovered flower named after her. The low-growing dome-shaped plant *Darwinia chantiae*, found between the shires of Mullewa and Morawa and around Canna, has jewel-like red flowers set against tiny silvery blue-green leaves. "I feel extremely grateful and honoured to have such a beautiful plant named after me," Alanna says. "I'm so lucky to have worked across a really botanically interesting part of the world. Every year, it's exciting leading up to spring thinking, 'I hope we get good rain; I can't wait to get out there and find some new stuff'."

## GATHER NEW MOSS

Scientists are delving into the mysteries and miracles of moss. They've found that, in areas of undisturbed native vegetation systems, the soils where mosses grow show increased nutrient recycling, decomposition of organic matter and control of harmful pathogens. Working with scientists from around the world, Dr David Eldridge, from the University of New South Wales, says mosses may be capable of countering carbon dioxide emissions by 6:1 compared to bare soils, by reabsorbing the $CO_2$ in a natural 'carbon capture' scheme. Further research will explore if mosses can create healthy soils as efficiently in urban environments, and how reintroducing mosses into degraded soil might hasten the regeneration process. The results could have us all throwing out our pressure hoses forever!

## fungi to the rescue

Researchers at the University of Sydney have found a potentially revolutionary way to break down polypropylene after it has been treated with UV light or heat. This plastic is said to account for about 28 per cent of global plastic waste, and only a fraction of that is recycled. Two common strains of fungi, *Aspergillus terreus* and *Engyodontium album*, have been found to reduce this commonly used plastic by 21 per cent over 30 days, and by 25–27 per cent after 90 days. While it's only baby steps at this stage, it could eventually see a massive reduction in plastic pollution in our environment as scientists discover how nature can, perhaps, protect itself over time.

**PHOTOS** *CAMELLIA* 'ALBA PLENA' BY DR STEPHEN UTICK (INTERNATIONAL CAMELLIA SOCIETY), ROB DAVIS (DBCA), ISTOCK

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28 March – 11 April 2024
Leader Jim Fogarty

Image: *Private garden in ÀVILA, SPAIN BY URQUIJO KASTNER*

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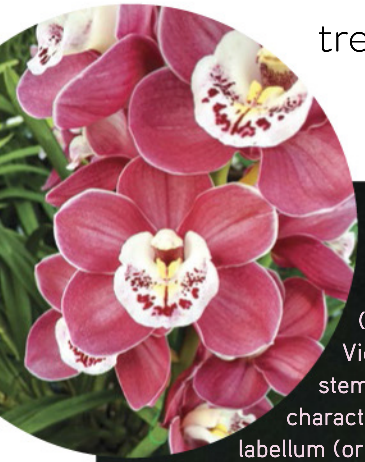
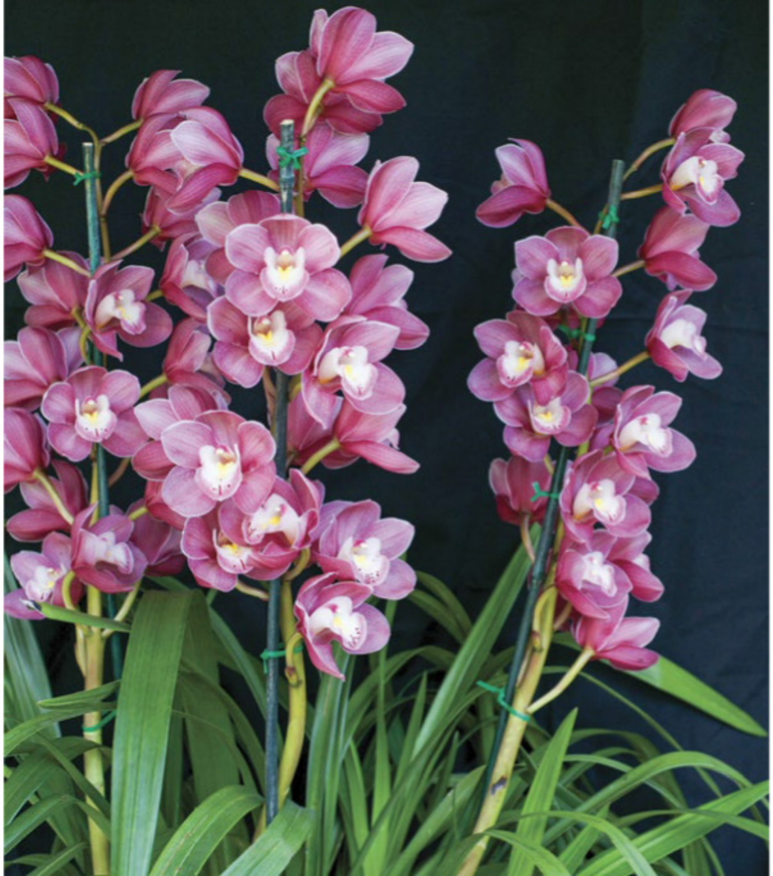
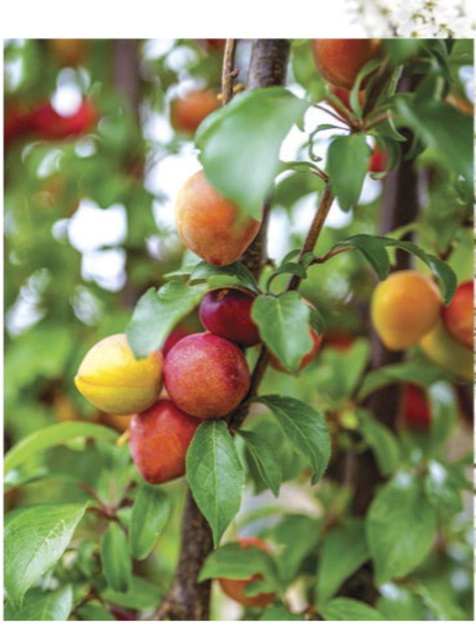
# PLANTS

From fabulous flowers to fruit trees, here's a selection of new releases for your garden



If you love 'look-at-me' cymbidium orchids, these two are worth adding to your wishlist. ***Cymbidium* Templestowe's Charm 'Julie'** (*left*) and **'Nicole'** (*below*), both bred by Victorian-based David Wain, produce multiple stems of vivid flowers but with quite different characteristics. 'Julie' features a white-tinged labellum (or 'lip') freckled with deep burgundy markings that stand out spectacularly against maroon petals edged with pale pink. 'Nicole' has more subtle markings, its paler pink petals fading to white at the edge, with a white-centred labellum. They thrive best in dappled sunlight or semi-shade in a quality free-draining orchid potting mix, and tolerate cramped root conditions for a while. Blooms appear in late winter through spring, and last for six weeks. **theorchidplace.com.au**

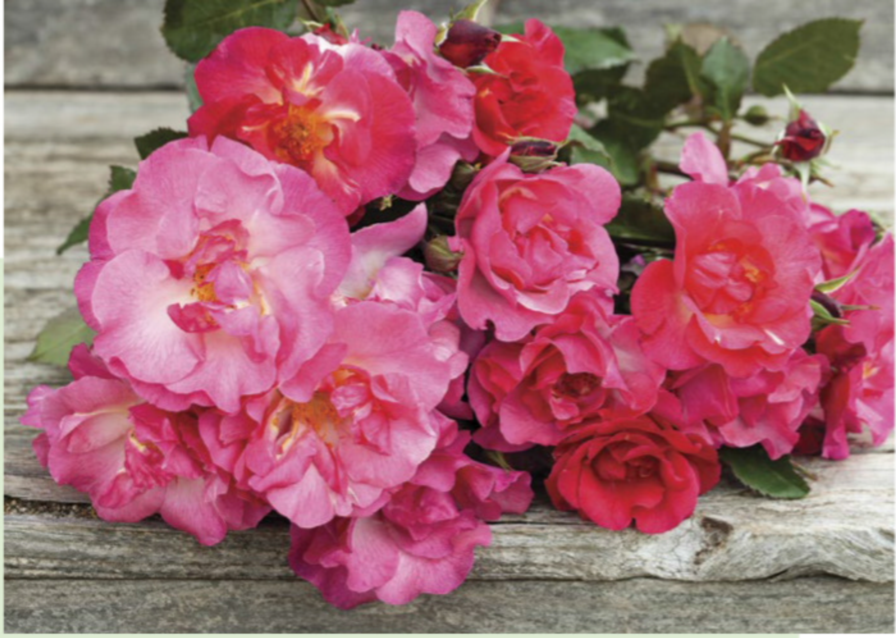




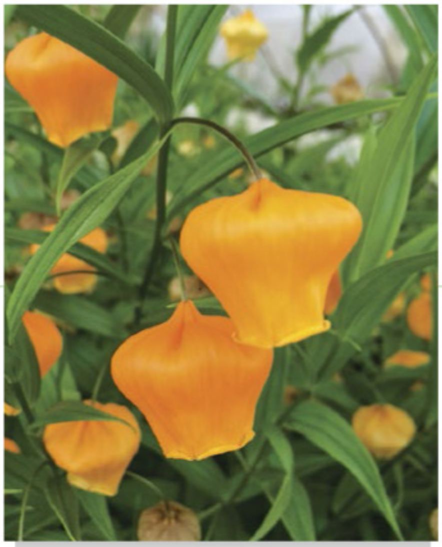
Here's one for those who yearn for an orchard but have limited garden space: the latest arrival in the 'Skinny' range of fruit trees. While its name, **Snow Queen 'VicTall' Skinny Plum**, is a mouthful, its fruit is delightfully diminutive and mild in flavour – just right for kids' lunches and snacking. Left to its own devices, the tree can grow up to 5m, but its girth is a trim 2m. Expect white blossom in spring (*above right*), followed by yellow-fleshed, thin-skinned yellow fruit that ripens to plum-red. **flemings.com.au**

**Iceland poppy 'Australis' (*Papaver nudicaule*)** is set to be a garden stunner, with sturdy 50–60cm stems supporting oversized flowers in sorbet colours, from creamy white through to yellow, coral, pink and red. Sow seed directly into well-drained, nutrient-rich soil in a sunny position in winter, early spring or autumn. They'll also make a jaunty show on a bright verandah or balcony in a container of good-quality potting mix. You can let Iceland poppies self-seed each year to produce drifts of colour – for the garden or the vase. **lambley.com.au** ►

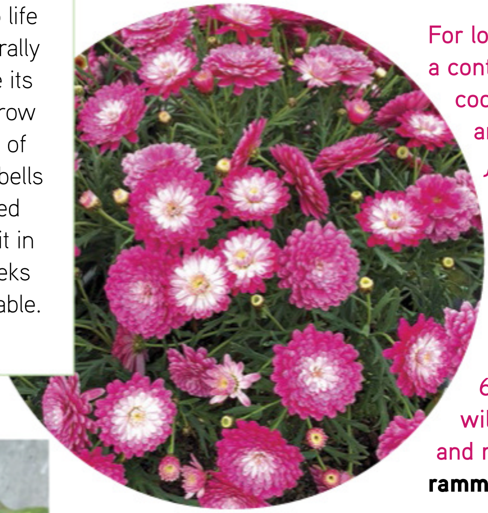
TEXT SALLY FELDMAN



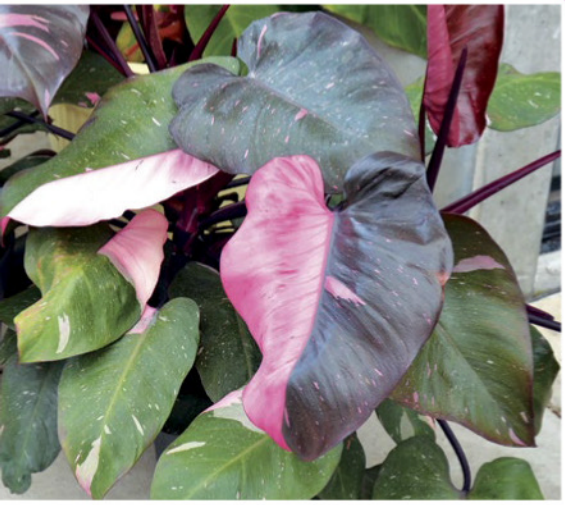
What could be more delightful than planting something that will bring you joy, and enrich the lives of other people too. The Australian-bred rose **Amber's Gift** was released this year and named for Amber, the first Hearing Assistance Dog trained by the Australian Lions Hearing Dogs (ALHD) association in 1982. This award-winning Floribunda's flowers start as almost-black buds, which unfurl to reveal frilled petals of deep pink-red that fade to mauve. It grows to 2m high, with clusters of up to eight gently scented blooms per head. Proceeds from bare-rooted plants are donated to ALHD to help continue its life-enhancing work. **wagnersrosenursery.com.au**



Known as golden lily of the valley or Christmas bells, ***Sandersonia aurantiaca*** is unique in that only one species of the genus has ever been recorded. Originating from the Natal region in South Africa, it's now rarely found in its native habitat. This fast-growing tuberous plant springs to life after its winter dormancy, and is generally in full bloom come Christmas – hence its nickname. Each branched stem can grow up to 60cm and supports a multitude of sunshine-orange flowers that nod like bells or Chinese lanterns on slender arched stalks. Grow it in the garden, or plant it in a pot. Flowers last for up to three weeks in a vase – perfect for the Christmas table. **tonkinsbulbs.com.au**



For lovers of cottage-style gardens or simply a container or two of welcoming colour in the cooler months, Federation daisies – which are marguerite daisies (*Argyranthemum frutescens*) bred by an Australian company specifically for Australian conditions – are a no-brainer. The new **Federation Fancy 'Pink Posy'** produces masses of repeat-flowering hot-pink blooms with striking white centres from autumn through to spring. Growing to a compact 60cm high and 45cm wide, 'Pink Posy' will thrive in full sun with very little fuss and miserly watering. **ramm.com.au**



There's something enticing about not knowing what a plant will reveal as it grows, and ***Philodendron erubescens*** **'Pink Princess'** is quite the enigma. Part of the Nature's Décor range, this variegated climber produces mid- to dark green and even burgundy foliage streaked, splashed and spotted with colour, from cream through to hot pink, lavender and purple. Give it support to help it climb, and place either indoors in a bright spot with indirect light or, in tropical climates, outside in a sheltered shady or semi-shaded corner. Then, just wait for each leaf to reveal its unique colour and pattern. **ballaustralia.com**

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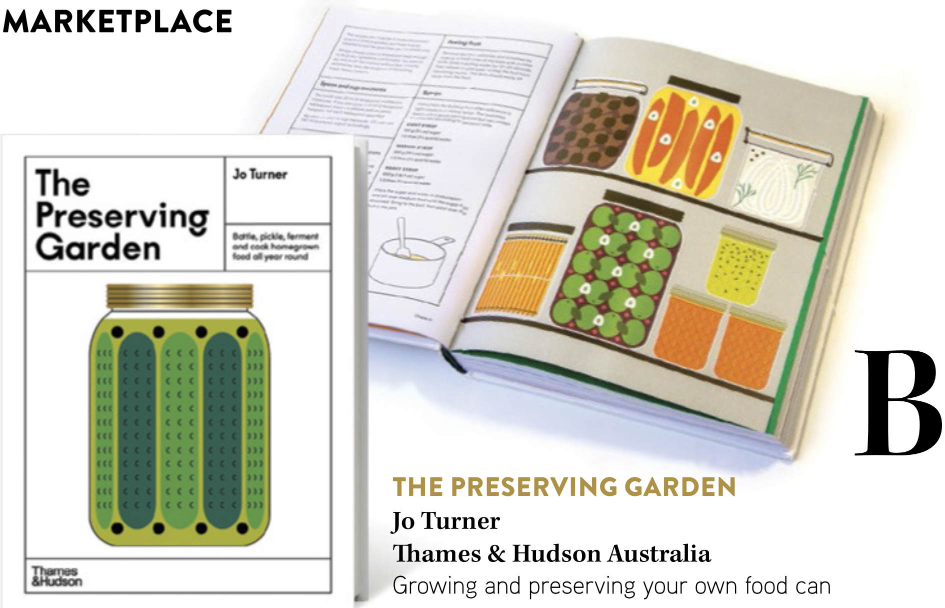
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**Jo Turner**

**Thames & Hudson Australia**

Growing and preserving your own food can reduce food miles, waste and plastic use, and help us to reclaim control over what we eat. This colourful and stylishly illustrated book offers practical guidance – from planting and caring for a vegie garden and fruit trees to bottling, pickling, fermenting and cooking your own home-grown food year round. Included are 43 plant profiles, each with growing notes both for beginners and those looking to improve their gardens. There are also preservation methods, more than 60 easy-to-follow and scalable recipes, ideas and tips to help you make the most of your produce, plus quick reference charts with information on preserving each profiled plant.

For details on how to win a copy of this book – along with a copy of its companion, *The Kitchen Garden* by Lucy Mora – plus a preserving kit, see page 86.

## WHAT'S FOR DINNER?

**Jill Griffiths**

**Thames & Hudson Australia**

Never before have we seen so much food produced by so few suppliers to feed so many people. Nor have consumers been so disconnected from their food production, yet so interested in the process. This thought-provoking book by Australian science writer Jill Griffiths explores the way our food is grown and our responsibilities as consumers. Blending science, history and lived experience, Griffiths introduces us to the plants, animals and people who put food on our plates, and examines how we can eat to nourish ourselves without impacting the planet.

WHAT'S FOR DINNER?
OUR FOOD, OUR CHOICES, OUR PLANET
JILL GRIFFITHS

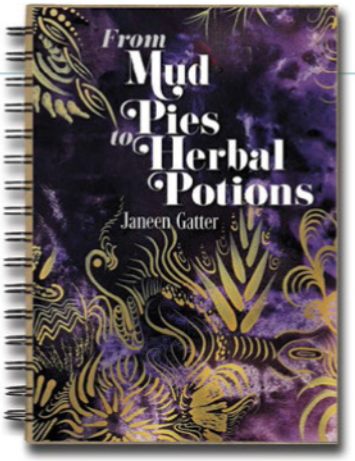
Harriet's Hungry Worms

## HARRIET'S HUNGRY WORMS

**Samantha Smith & Melissa Johns**

**EK Books**

In this charming, funny and vibrantly illustrated children's book, Harriet is tasked with caring for her family's worm farm. She watches over the compost worms that live in a large green box, eating a variety of food scraps and recycled material. But Harriet becomes bored watching and waiting for the worms to do something. Then she discovers a tap on the box that produces worm wee. She mixes it with water and sprinkles it on her vegie patch, declaring it will be the biggest and tastiest vegie patch ever! Combined with tips on feeding worms and interesting facts, this is a delightful book for young readers.



## FROM MUD PIES TO HERBAL POTIONS

**Janeen Gatter**

**Black Rainbow Printing (self-published)**

From making mud pies as a child, to becoming a mother and nursery owner, Janeen Gatter has been on a 30-year journey, accumulating knowledge from growing herbs and medicinal weeds and using them in remedies for her family and friends. Here, she shares some of her best recipes for making low-cost natural health and beauty preparations. In the first chapter, she outlines the benefits and risks of using plants remedially, and ensuring they are correctly identified. Well-known plants are profiled, with details on how to collect and store them. And you can learn how to make plant-infused vinegars, oils and teas, from which balms, hair treatments, ointments and serums can be made. Available to purchase at **mudpiesherbalpotions.wordpress.com**

**TEXT** CAROLE GRIDLEY **PHOTO** PAUL DRURUY

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# looking SHARP

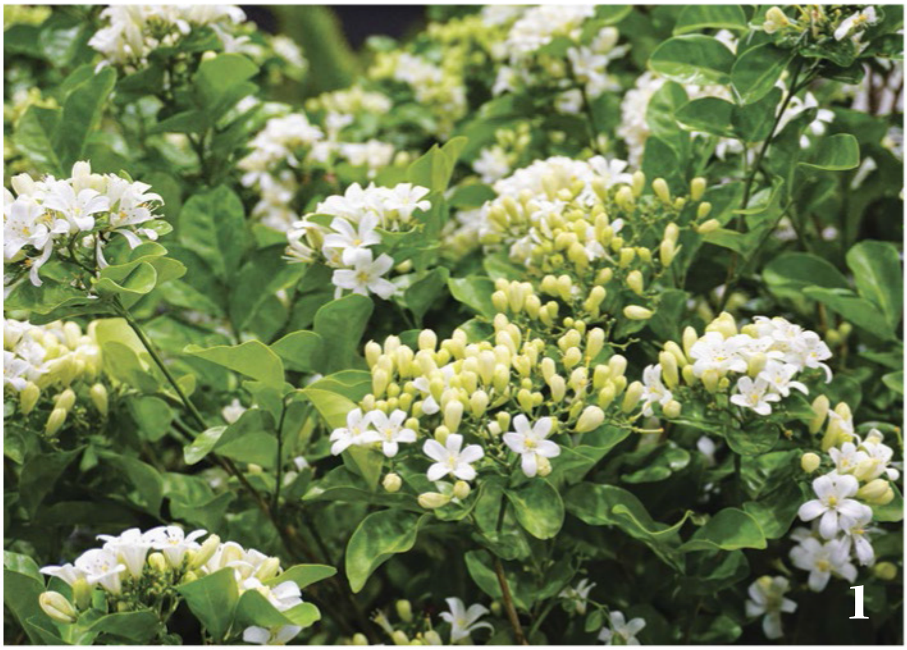
### Hedges need dedicated maintenance, but they offer so much design versatility that it's worth the effort, writes **ROGER FOX**

Hedges are the ultimate form of plant repetition – usually one species, all in a row, and often with the satisfying symmetry of square-cut shape thrown in. With their crisp lines and sense of order, clipped hedges bring lots of structural impact to a garden space, be it large or small, contemporary or traditional. And they are practical features, too.

In garden design, shaped hedges are ideal front perimeter plantings, either alongside or instead of a fence. When trimmed low, they also make appealing pathway borders or bed edgings, where they can be trained in straight lines or long serpentine curves. Tall hedges are ideal structural dividers in a garden, to separate a space into different garden rooms or to screen off utilities, such as the clothesline or garden shed. You can also use waist-high hedges in a similar way, perhaps to enclose a herb or vegetable garden or delineate an entertaining area.

When you're choosing plants for a hedge, make sure they will reach your required height, and decide whether you want seasonal flowers to feature. As with any plant selection, also make sure your chosen species suits your climate as well as the site's exposure to sun or shade. Just about any shrub can be grown as a hedge – here's a selection of 10 standouts.

**OPPOSITE**
A lilac with deep pink blooms overhangs a clipped box hedge, creating textural contrast and an inviting entrance to the lawn area.



## 1 Orange jessamine (*Murraya paniculata*)

In frost-free areas, this member of the citrus family is hard to beat as a formal hedge plant. Its dense, glossy foliage trims beautifully, and waves of fragrant white flowers appear repeatedly throughout the warm months, notably after rain. It forms a handsome waist-high hedge, but can be encouraged to form a much taller screen.

- Tropical to warm temperate climates
- Full sun, light shade
- Formal hedging or screens, 1–3m high
- Plant 50–80cm apart

## 2 Box (*Buxus* spp.)

This iconic hedge plant ticks all the boxes (pun intended!). Small leaves, short internodes (the space between each leaf) and growth right down to the base make it the gold standard of hedging plants. The most popular forms are English box (*Buxus sempervirens*) with dark green oval leaves, and Japanese box (*B. microphylla* var. *japonica*) with rounded leaves and golden-green new growth. Dwarf edging box (*B. sempervirens* 'Suffruticosa') makes a cute mini-hedge at just 20–30cm high.

- Warm temperate to cool climates
- Full sun, light shade
- Formal hedging, 20cm–2m high
- Plant 30–40cm apart (10–15cm for dwarf edging box) ▶

**PHOTOS** ISTOCK, GAP PHOTOS/HOWARD RICE

2

3

### 3 *Leptospermum laevigatum* 'Fore Shore'

A form of the coastal tea-tree, 'Fore Shore' makes a delightful dense and hardy hedge, and is often promoted as a native alternative to English box. Featuring grey-green foliage and lovely bronze new growth, it's a super hardy performer, tolerating a wide range of conditions, including light frosts, sandy coastal soils, salt spray and extended periods of dry weather.

- Most climates
- Full sun, light shade
- Low hedging, 30–50cm high
- Plant 30–40cm apart

4

### 4 Escallonia (*Escallonia* spp.)

An evergreen shrub with small, shiny leaves, escallonia makes an excellent small- to medium-sized hedge. Sprays of dainty flowers, mostly in shades of pink or white, add charm over summer. Native to South America, it tolerates coastal conditions and has good frost tolerance and low water requirements once it's well established. Check out the 'Hedge With an Edge' range of escallonias, which grow to about 1–1.5m in height.

- Subtropical to cool climates
- Full sun, light shade
- Formal hedging, up to 2.5m high
- Plant 30–40cm apart

5

### 5 Showy honey myrtle (*Melaleuca nesophila*)

This sweet native is tolerant of frost, drought and seaside conditions. The cultivar 'Little Nessie' is a compact rounded form with bright green leaves and appealing mauve flowers during summer. It makes a delightful small to medium hedge plant. Feed annually with a native plant fertiliser and trim only lightly when in bloom.

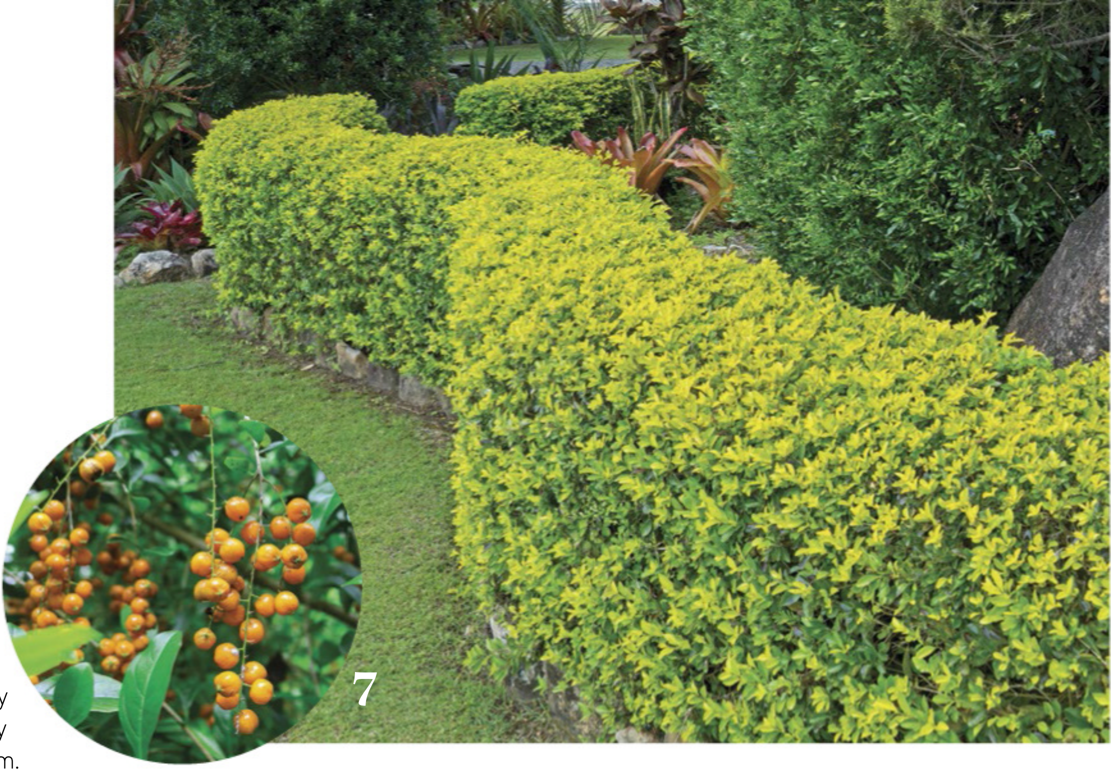
- Subtropical to cool climates
- Full sun, light shade
- Informal hedging, 1–2m high
- Plant 50–80cm apart

**PHOTOS** PLANTS MANAGEMENT AUSTRALIA, ALAMY, GAP PHOTOS/BRENT WILSON

### 6 Lillypilly (*Syzygium* and *Acmena* spp.)

Lillypillies (seen here as the background hedge, with clipped box in the foreground) have become some of Australia's favourite hedging plants over recent decades, especially for taller screening purposes. Their dense, glossy foliage responds well to trimming, and many varieties offer the extra charm of bronze or red new growth. With a vast range of cultivars available, choose one that suits your required height and is preferably not susceptible to psyllid insect attack, such as *Syzygium* 'Garden Lights' or *Acmena* 'Red Head'.

- Subtropical to cool climates
- Full sun, light shade
- Tall hedging or screens, up to 5m high
- Plant 50cm–1m apart ►



## 7 *Duranta erecta* 'Sheena's Gold'

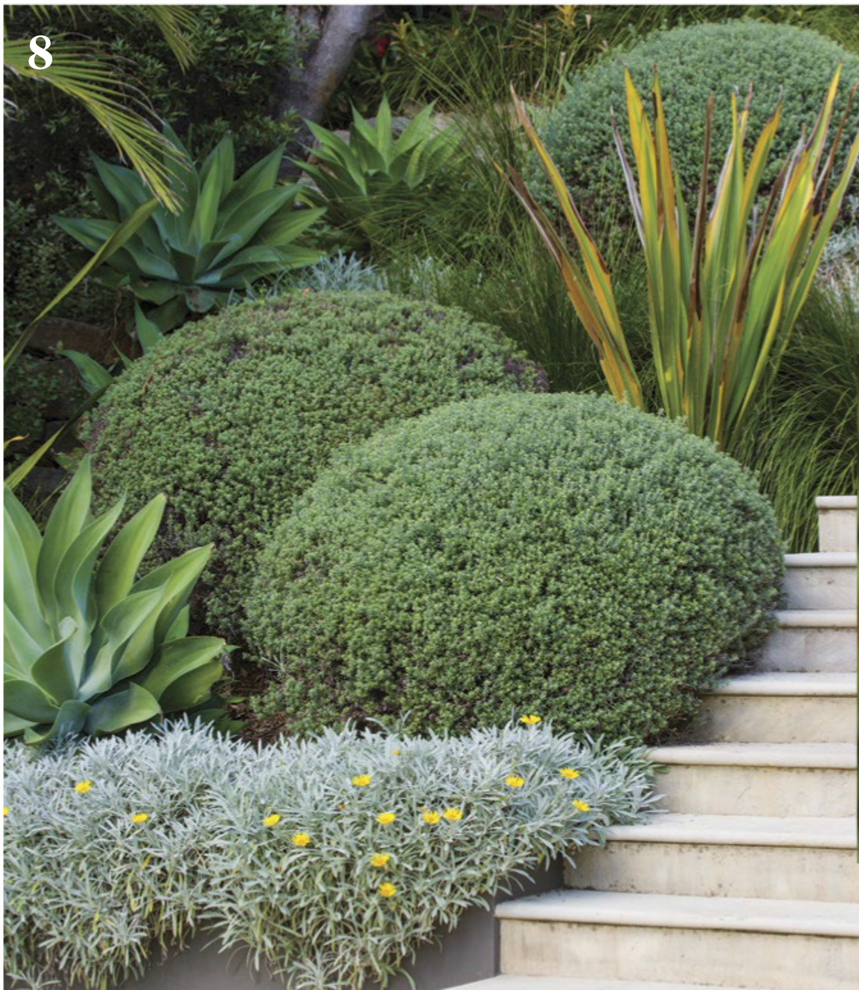
The luminous golden-green foliage of this plant makes it great for providing colour contrast in warm-climate gardens. It quickly forms a small- to medium-sized hedge and also looks rather lovely grown as a double hedge, with a taller dark green species behind it. Left untrimmed, this plant can produce mauve flowers followed by orange berries, but these are rarely seen when it's grown in hedge form.

- Tropical to warm temperate climates
- Full sun, light shade
- Formal hedging, 50cm–2m high
- Plant 40–50cm apart

## 8 Westringia (*Westringia* spp.)

With its fine but dense leaves, this native shrub lends itself perfectly to hedging. Its foliage colour ranges from deep green to silvery grey, depending on the variety, and small mauve or white flowers appear through winter and spring. Tolerant of drought and light frosts, it's a vigorous grower, so factor in frequent clipping to keep it in shape. There are many different westringias available, including the popular hedging forms 'Grey Box' and 'Aussie Box'.

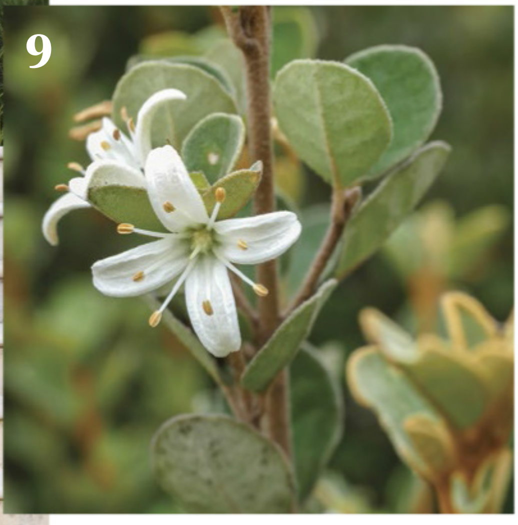
- Most climates
- Full sun
- Formal or informal hedging, 1–2m high
- Plant 50–80cm apart



## 9 White correa (*Correa alba*)

Rounded leaves of greyish green make this a very attractive native hedging plant, even more so when it's dotted with white star-shaped flowers during the cooler months of the year. Reasonably slow growing and easy to maintain, it's tolerant of drought, light frosts and coastal conditions. It looks lovely when trimmed lightly, creating a softer, more informal outline.

- Most climates
- Full sun, light shade
- Informal hedging, 1–1.5m high
- Plant 50–80cm apart

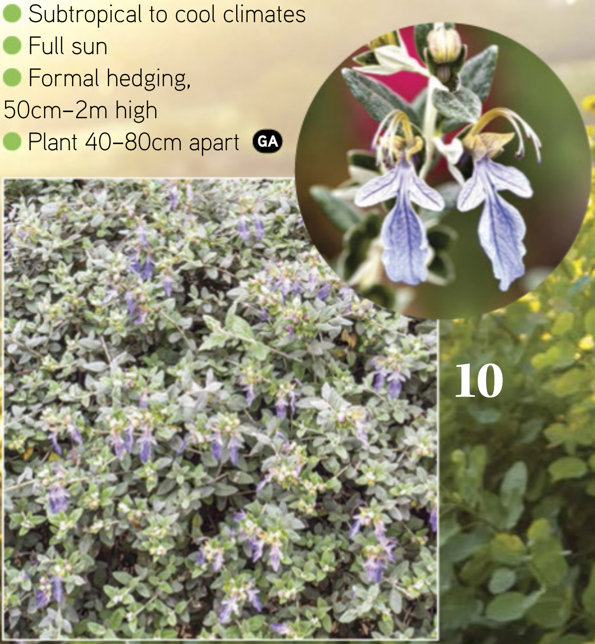


**PHOTOS** ISTOCK, ALAMY, GAP PHOTOS/BRENT WILSON, GAP PHOTOS/MADDIE THORNHILL

## 10 Germander (*Teucrium fruticans*)

Featuring silver-grey foliage, germander makes an especially pretty hedge that looks right at home in cottage-style gardens. A member of the mint family, it produces small blue double-lipped flowers in spring, which sit neatly among the aromatic leaves. It's a great plant for bringing a touch of silvery light to gardens that have a lot of dark green background foliage. It tolerates coastal conditions.

- Subtropical to cool climates
- Full sun
- Formal hedging, 50cm–2m high
- Plant 40–80cm apart GA



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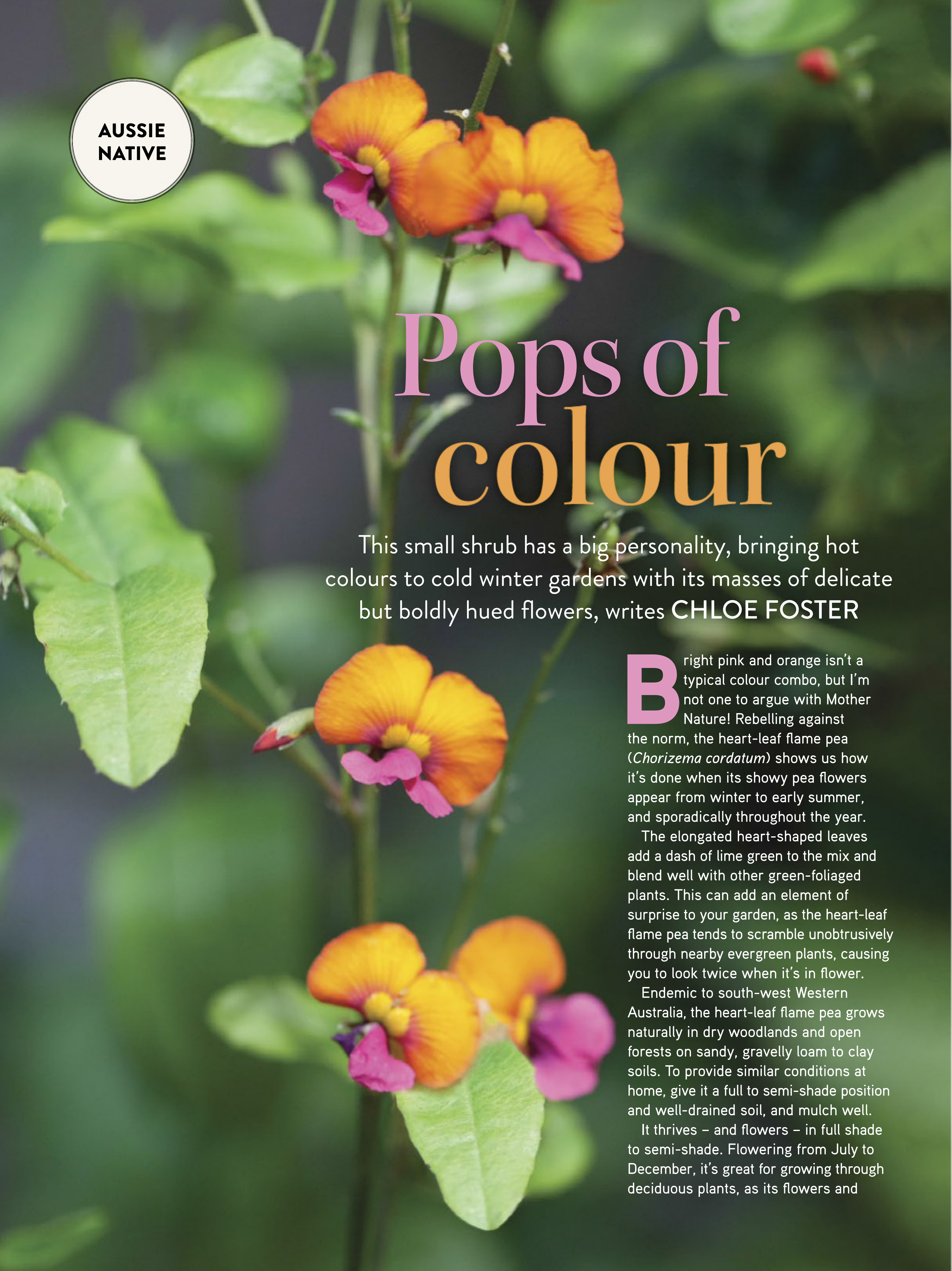


AUSSIE NATIVE

# Pops of colour

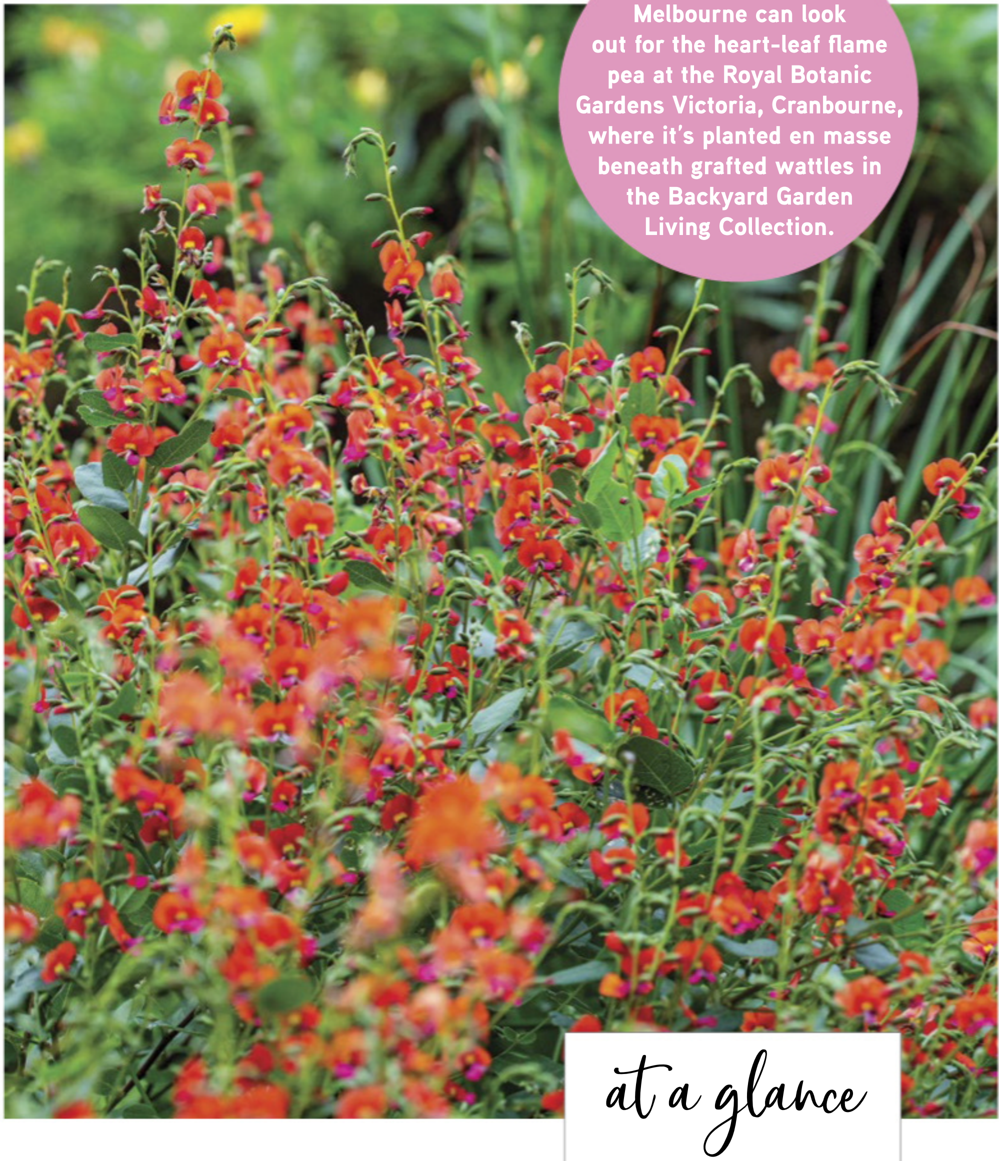
This small shrub has a big personality, bringing hot colours to cold winter gardens with its masses of delicate but boldly hued flowers, writes **CHLOE FOSTER**

Bright pink and orange isn't a typical colour combo, but I'm not one to argue with Mother Nature! Rebelling against the norm, the heart-leaf flame pea (*Chorizema cordatum*) shows us how it's done when its showy pea flowers appear from winter to early summer, and sporadically throughout the year.

The elongated heart-shaped leaves add a dash of lime green to the mix and blend well with other green-foliaged plants. This can add an element of surprise to your garden, as the heart-leaf flame pea tends to scramble unobtrusively through nearby evergreen plants, causing you to look twice when it's in flower.

Endemic to south-west Western Australia, the heart-leaf flame pea grows naturally in dry woodlands and open forests on sandy, gravelly loam to clay soils. To provide similar conditions at home, give it a full to semi-shade position and well-drained soil, and mulch well.

It thrives – and flowers – in full shade to semi-shade. Flowering from July to December, it's great for growing through deciduous plants, as its flowers and



Gardeners in Melbourne can look out for the heart-leaf flame pea at the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, Cranbourne, where it's planted en masse beneath grafted wattles in the Backyard Garden Living Collection.

bright green foliage provide interest in the dormant season. It works well planted underneath deciduous shrubs and small trees such as dogwoods and mollis azaleas, or it will grow to a 1m upright shrub without the support of another plant or structure.

This plant is particularly spectacular grown en masse or scattered throughout a perennial border. It grows well in pots, so gardeners with courtyards and small spaces don't have to miss out. Use a premium-grade potting mix suitable for native plants. Look for the Australian Standard logo (five white ticks in a red box) on packaging, which shows the mix has been certified as a premium product.

The heart-leaf flame pea can be paired with any pink or orange-flowered plant – think *Grevillea* 'Winter Delight', banksias, emu tree (*Hakea francisiana)*, correas, epacris or croweas – to provide uniformity and that wow-factor. It's just as delightful when paired with exotic herbaceous perennials such as buddleja, salvia and agastache, and it adds a cheery pop of colour to garden beds with mixed colours too. It flowers at the same time as native wisteria (*Hardenbergia comptoniana*), purple coral pea (*H. violacea*) and many wattles. I've also seen it growing through a coast banksia (*Banksia integrifolia*), with its bright flowers sparkling around the tree.

## care & maintenance

The heart-leaf flame pea requires minimal maintenance when in the right position. Full shade to semi-shade is best, but it will grow in full sun when adequately mulched, however the flowers tend to fade quickly.

Temperate and arid climates are best, as it doesn't love humidity. Prune one third to half of the plant after the main flower flush to encourage compact growth and more flowers. Apply a slow-release native fertiliser at planting, and again if foliage starts to yellow and flowering is reduced. Water well at planting, and mulch. Provide supplementary water during dry spells.

This species propagates easily from seed. Place seeds in a mug and pour boiling water over them. Leave them to sit overnight before sowing. You can also strike this plant from semi-hardwood cuttings. Tips and stems that are too soft will wilt and rot.

AS A MEMBER OF THE PEA FAMILY, FABACEAE, CHORIZEMAS HAVE NODULES ON THEIR ROOTS THAT ADD NITROGEN TO THE SOIL. THIS IS AN ESSENTIAL NUTRIENT FOR HEALTHY LEAF GROWTH.

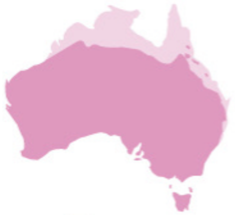
### at a glance

**common name**
heart-leaf flame pea

**botanic name**
*Chorizema cordatum*

**plant type**
small scrambling shrub

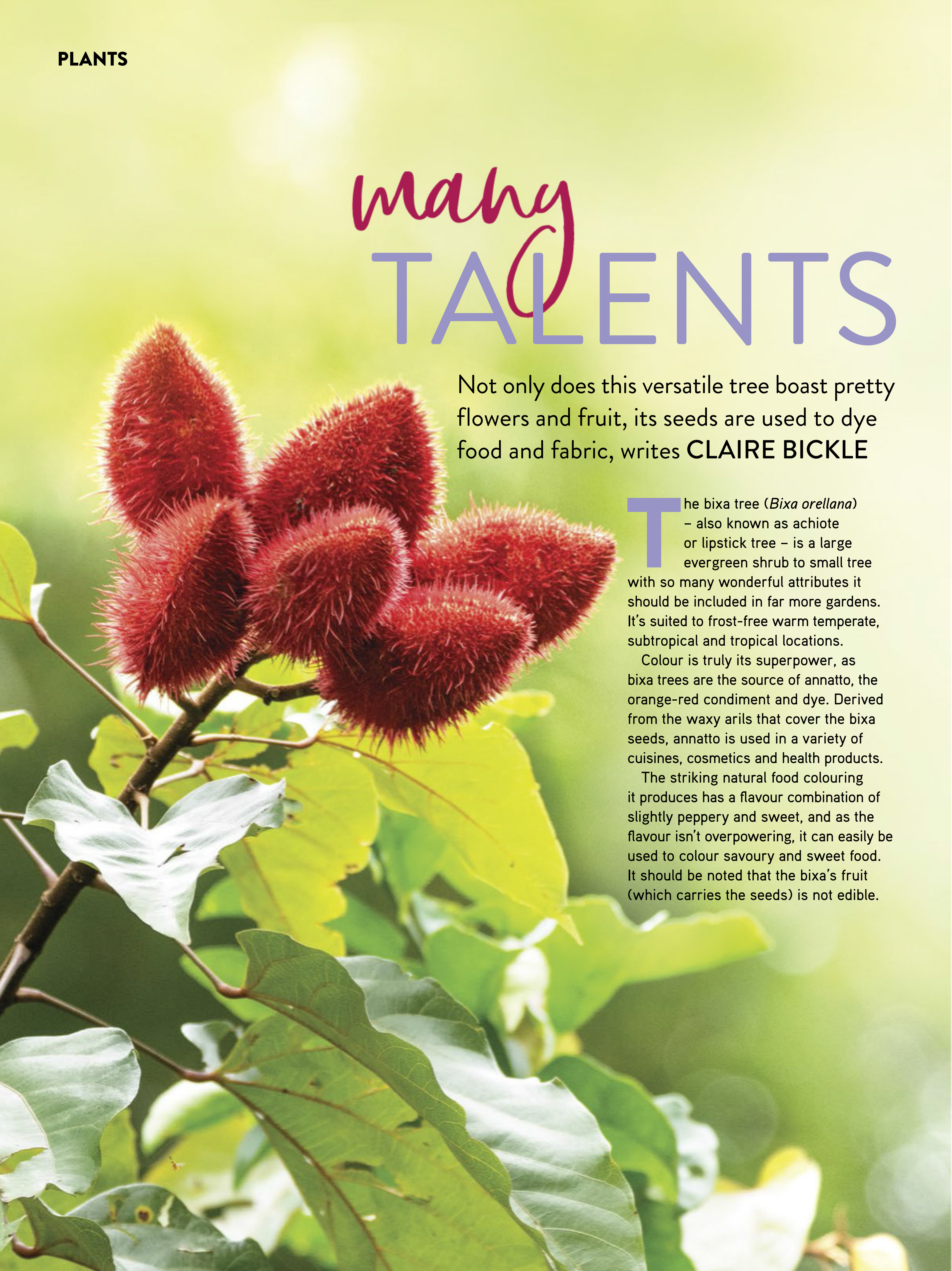
↑ 1–1.5m ↔ 1–1.5m
☁ ⛅ shade, semi-shade
autumn or spring



PHOTOS ALAMY, SHUTTERSTOCK

# many TALENTS

Not only does this versatile tree boast pretty flowers and fruit, its seeds are used to dye food and fabric, writes **CLAIRE BICKLE**

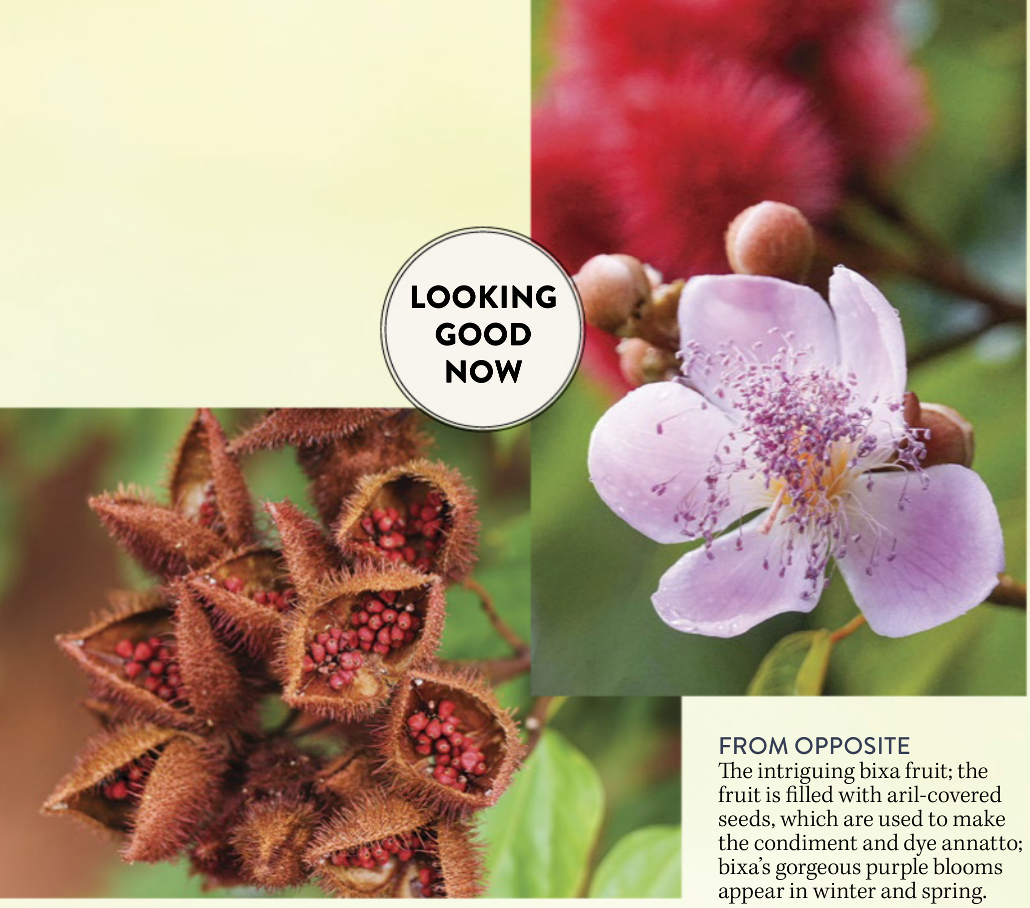


The bixa tree (*Bixa orellana*) – also known as achiote or lipstick tree – is a large evergreen shrub to small tree with so many wonderful attributes it should be included in far more gardens. It's suited to frost-free warm temperate, subtropical and tropical locations.

Colour is truly its superpower, as bixa trees are the source of annatto, the orange-red condiment and dye. Derived from the waxy arils that cover the bixa seeds, annatto is used in a variety of cuisines, cosmetics and health products.

The striking natural food colouring it produces has a flavour combination of slightly peppery and sweet, and as the flavour isn't overpowering, it can easily be used to colour savoury and sweet food. It should be noted that the bixa's fruit (which carries the seeds) is not edible.

## LOOKING GOOD NOW



FROM OPPOSITE
The intriguing bixa fruit; the fruit is filled with aril-covered seeds, which are used to make the condiment and dye annatto; bixa's gorgeous purple blooms appear in winter and spring.

Native to Mexico and much of South America, bixa is very popular in other parts of the world including Africa, Asia and, in particular, the Philippines, where annatto is used extensively in cooking.

In warm climates and ideal conditions, bixa can reach 6–10m high, but more typically 2–5m. In cooler climates where frost occurs, it can be grown in a pot, allowing it to be moved to a sheltered position or even a glasshouse in winter.

Bixa makes an attractive feature tree within a mixed large shrubbery, and it works as a backdrop in a subtropical, tropical or cottage-style garden. It will probably be the star of the show in a productive orchard.

I've seen bixas looking a picture in the sunny tropical gardens of Cairns and Port Douglas in Far North Queensland, where they're married with crotons, palms, heliconias, frangipanis and ornamental gingers. They're equally as eye-catching further south, such as within the Brisbane Botanic Gardens Mt Coot-tha. In the subtropics, their planting companions could be salvia, dombeya, crepe myrtle, plumbago and the delightful pride of Barbados.

The plant has a lovely rounded canopy, and its manageable height makes it a useful choice for suburban gardens. Bixa will develop into a tree to sit under, play around, admire and use as a screening plant.

Its dense canopy provides useful shade and makes it an ideal habitat tree for nesting birds. Its delightful pink-purple flowers produced throughout autumn and winter are a magnet for bees and butterflies.

When the flowers have finished, the plant's renowned walnut-sized, heart-shaped fruits form – another attractive feature. The fruit have an outer casing of spikes that look prickly but are quite soft. Initially the fruit is red, and as it ages it turns a rusty brown.

Bixas tolerate a wide range of conditions and soil types, although free-draining soils with a high amount of organic matter are preferred. For best growth and flowering, fertilise throughout the growing season of spring and summer.

Little to no pruning is required with these fast-growing, self-shaping trees. A light pruning once the fruit has ripened and the seeds are harvested can keep the tree a little tidier but isn't really necessary.

It's recommended to water this plant during extended dry spells. Bixa has little to no pest or disease issues, but it does have weed potential.

### SHADES OF RED

**Annatto was used by various ancient civilisations for body, face and hair paint, as it was thought to ward off illnesses and evil spirits.**

**Nowadays, it's used as a dye in vegan makeup. Being cruelty free and GMO free, it can be found in products such as lipsticks, lip balms, rouges and eye shadows – hence its other common name, lipstick tree.**

**Unsurprisingly, ground bixa seeds also make an excellent fabric dye. What is surprising is that the colour it delivers in most natural fabrics isn't red, but rather a yellow or orange. With the correct mordants (dye fixatives), it's a reliable and stable source of colour.**

### at a glance

**common name**
bixa, achiote, lipstick tree

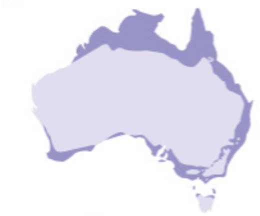
**botanic name**
*Bixa orellana*

**plant type**
large shrub to small tree

↑ 2–10m ↔ 3–5m

☀ ⛅ full sun, semi-shade

✂ autumn to spring

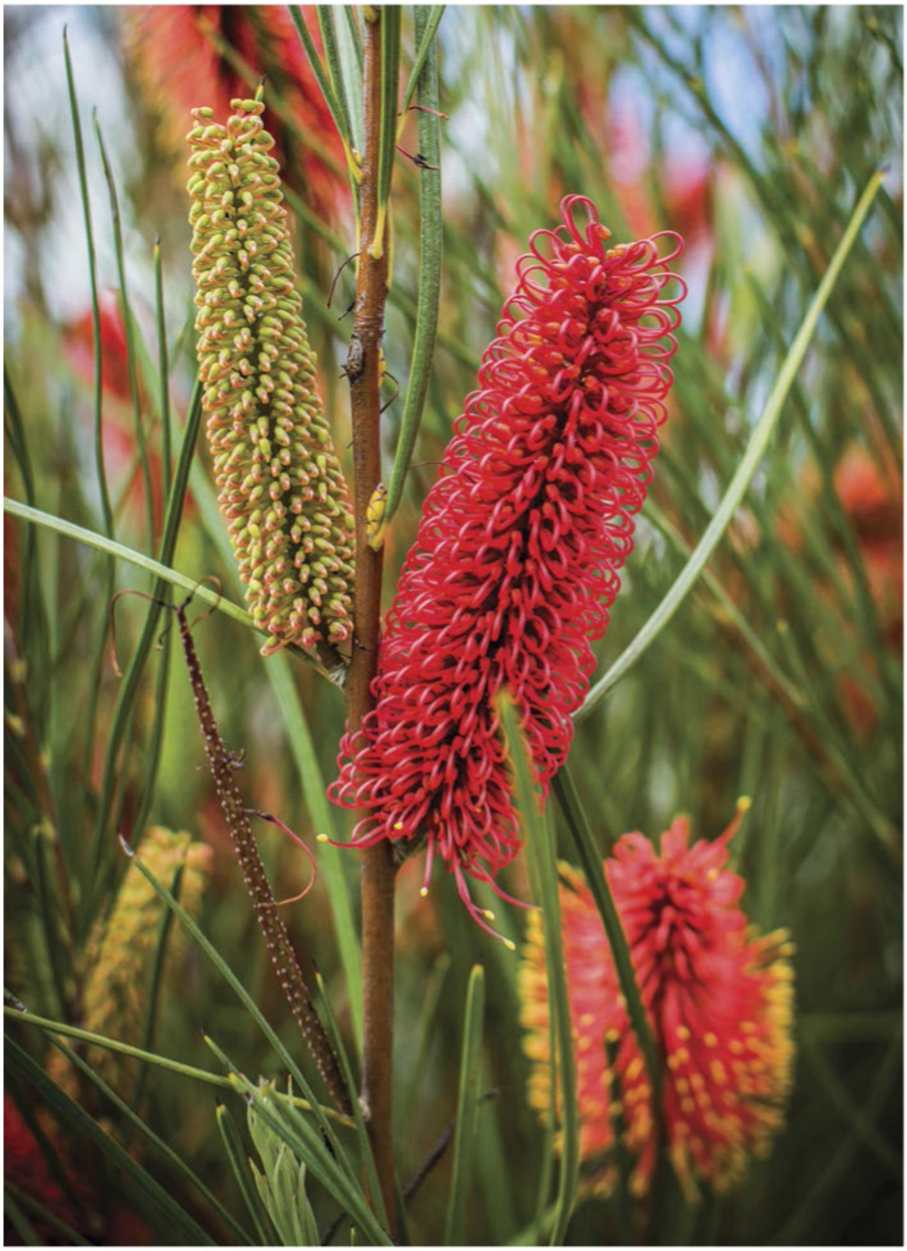


■ suitable

PHOTOS ALAMY, ISTOCK

# winter WOW

While some plants take a break in winter, others are in full swing, producing a kaleidoscope of colour that makes people and pollinators very happy. **AB BISHOP** shares 12 eye-catching winter garden favourites.



## NATIVES

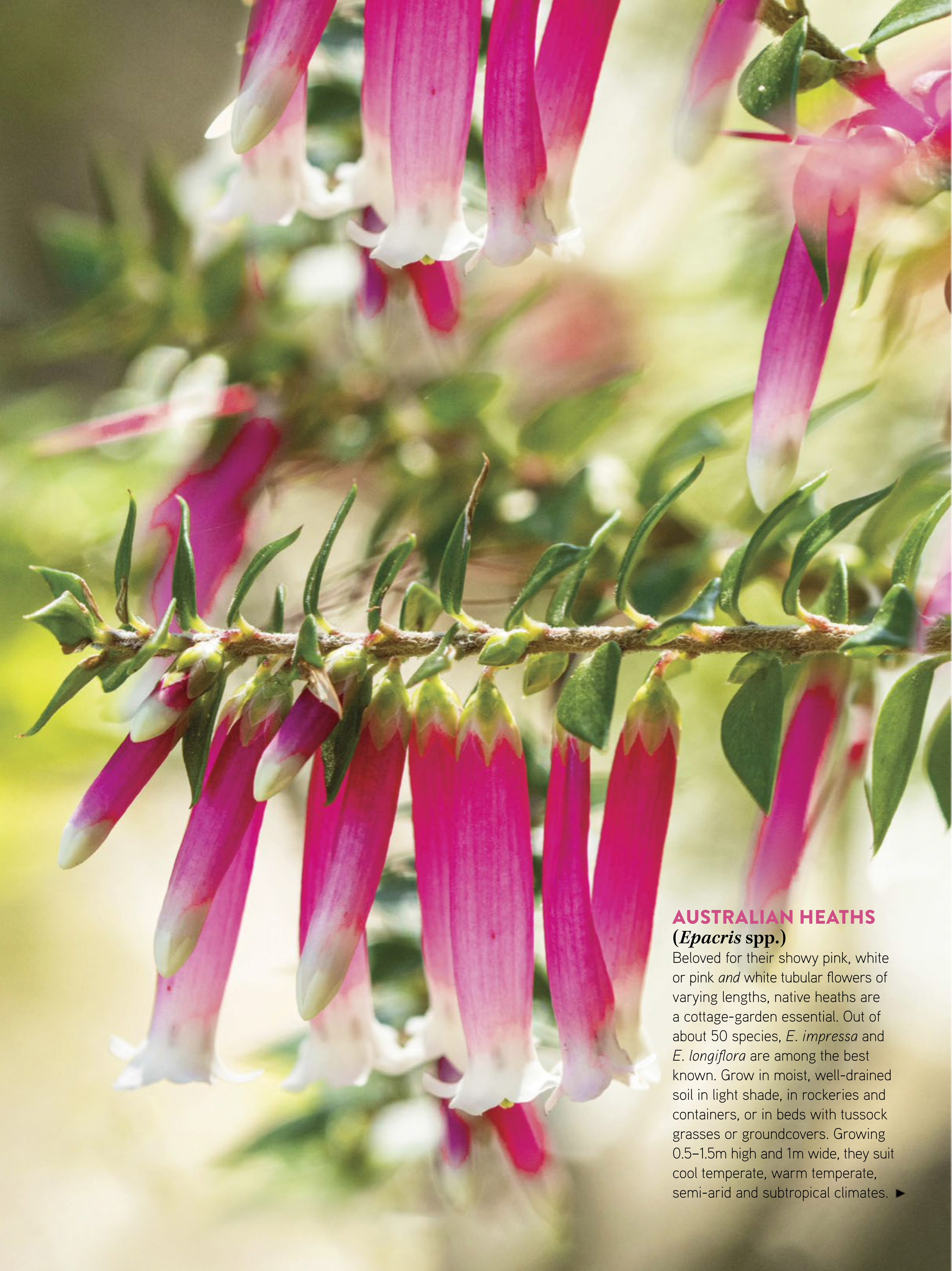
**Many Australian native plants are at their flowering best through winter – sometimes starting in autumn or continuing well into spring – making this a fantastic time to visit native public gardens and nurseries around the country.**

### GRASS-LEAF HAKEA

**(*Hakea francisiana*)**

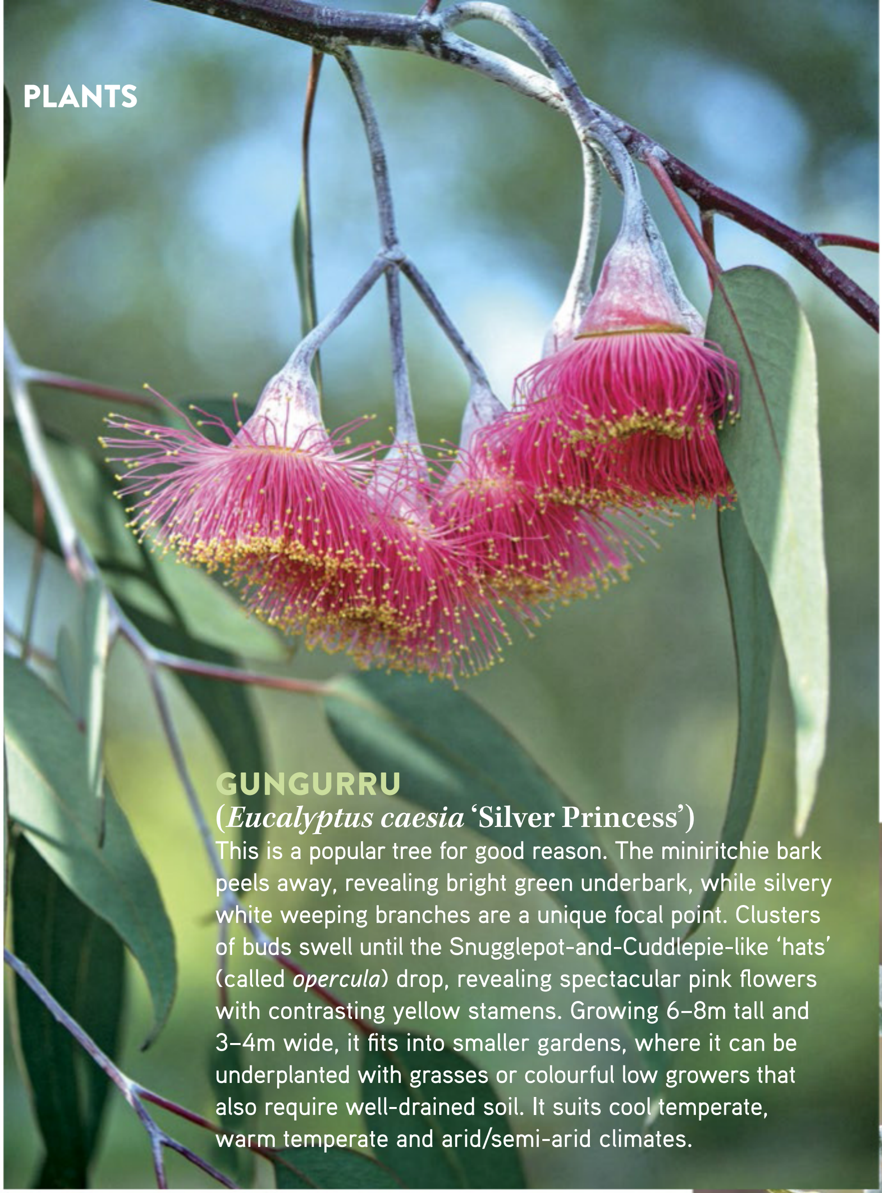
The eye-catching pink-red racemes of this large shrub contrast with the narrow grey-green leaves they're nestled within. Local to inland areas of South Australia and southern Western Australia, it thrives in well-drained soil in a sunny to lightly shaded spot. It is drought tolerant and somewhat frost tolerant once established. The plant's striking nectar-rich blooms bring in wildlife, and its seeds are relished by cockatoos. Grafted plants suit heavier soils. Growing 2–4m high and 2–3m wide, it suits warm temperate, cool temperate and arid/semi-arid climates.

**PHOTOS** ISTOCK, GAP PHOTOS/TREVOR NICHOLSON CHRISTIE



## AUSTRALIAN HEATHS
## (*Epacris* spp.)

Beloved for their showy pink, white or pink *and* white tubular flowers of varying lengths, native heaths are a cottage-garden essential. Out of about 50 species, *E. impressa* and *E. longiflora* are among the best known. Grow in moist, well-drained soil in light shade, in rockeries and containers, or in beds with tussock grasses or groundcovers. Growing 0.5–1.5m high and 1m wide, they suit cool temperate, warm temperate, semi-arid and subtropical climates. ►



## GUNGURRU

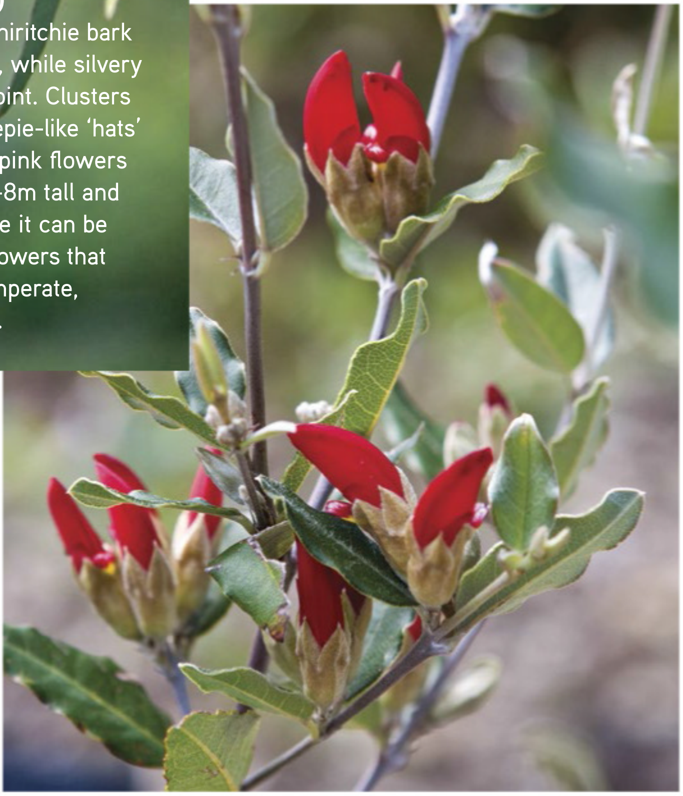
### (*Eucalyptus caesia* 'Silver Princess')

This is a popular tree for good reason. The miniritchie bark peels away, revealing bright green underbark, while silvery white weeping branches are a unique focal point. Clusters of buds swell until the Snugglepot-and-Cuddlepie-like 'hats' (called *opercula*) drop, revealing spectacular pink flowers with contrasting yellow stamens. Growing 6–8m tall and 3–4m wide, it fits into smaller gardens, where it can be underplanted with grasses or colourful low growers that also require well-drained soil. It suits cool temperate, warm temperate and arid/semi-arid climates.

## WOOLLYBUTT

### (*Eucalyptus miniata*) ▶

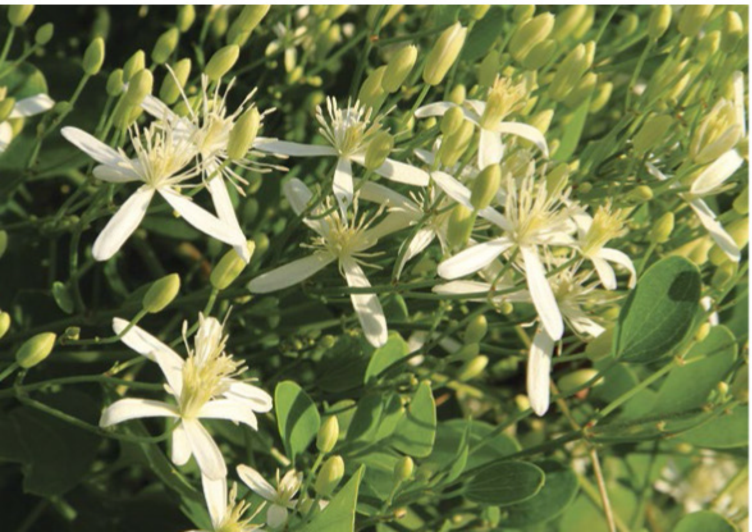
The common name of this open-canopied gum refers to the fibrous bark around the base of the otherwise smooth white trunk. Used by Bininj/Mungguy people – Kakadu's traditional owners – as a seasonal indicator, vivid orange flowers appear at the start of the dry season, signalling the time to begin land-management burns. The nectar-rich blooms pop against the blue sky and attract insects, which encourage microbats. The tree's seeds provide an important food for the red-tailed black cockatoo, too. Growing 15–25m tall, it suits tropical climates.



## SMALL-LEAFED CLEMATIS

### (*Clematis microphylla*) ▼

This fast-growing vine with delicate twining stems is robust when grown in semi-shade to full sun in well-drained soil. Train up fences or trellises, or allow it to scramble over the ground or retaining walls, or through large shrubs. Starry flowers appear from July, followed by attractive feathery seed heads. Prune lightly after the seeds have passed their prime. Growing to 5m tall, it is not suitable for tropical climates.



## SWAN RIVER PEA

### (*Gastrolobium celsianum*) ▲

This self-shaping shrub makes an unusual low hedge, and its dense habit provides habitat and dissuades weeds. It can be clipped for a neater look. Small, prolific red flowers bejewel stems for months. Its leaves are green on top and silvery-grey (and hirsute) below. While other *Gastrolobium* species contain fluoroacetate, an active ingredient in the 1080 poison, it doesn't occur in this plant. Growing 0.5–1.5m tall and 1–3m wide, it suits cool temperate, warm temperate and arid/semi-arid climates. ►

**PHOTOS** ISTOCK, MARTIN POT, ALAMY

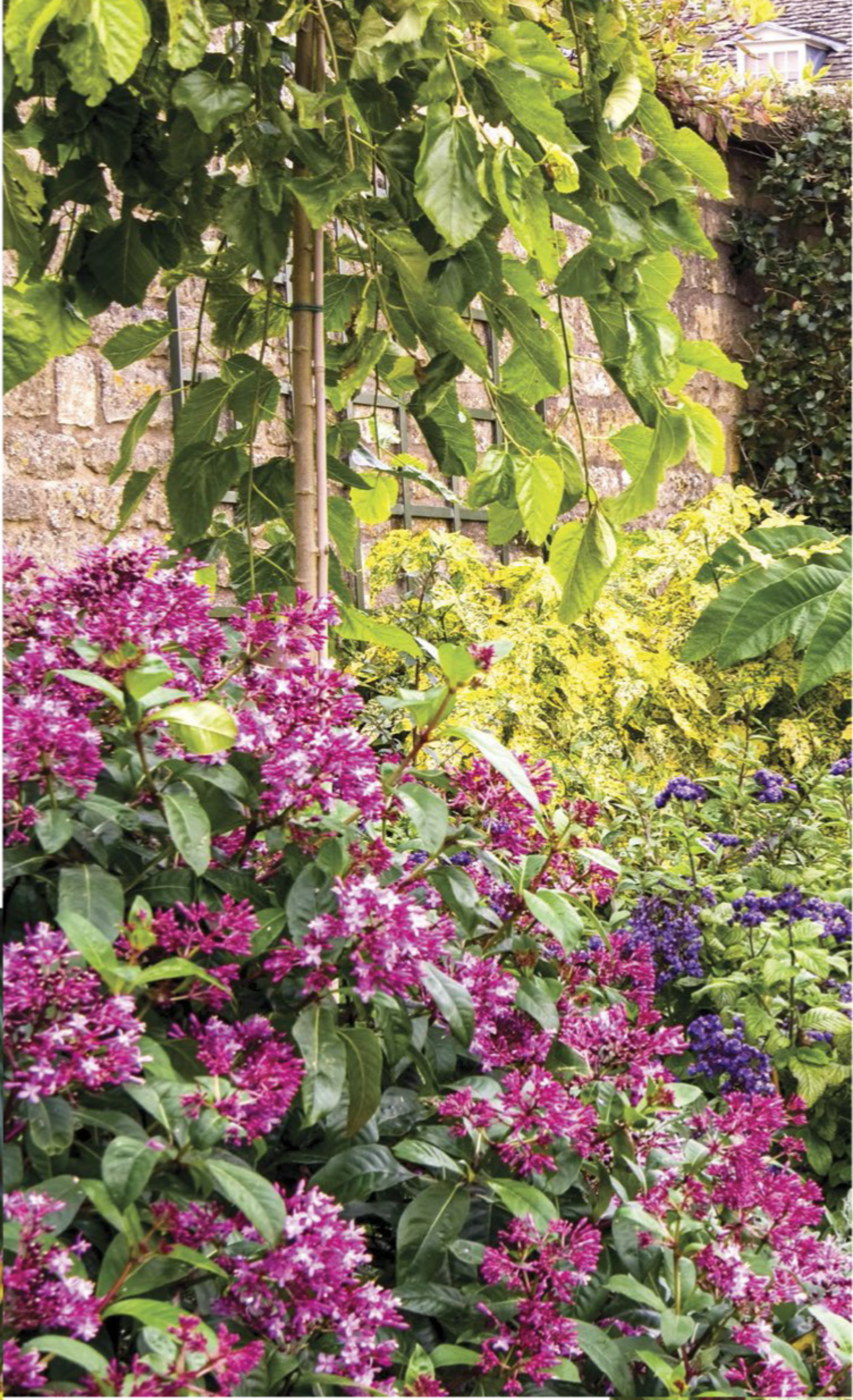
# NON-NATIVES

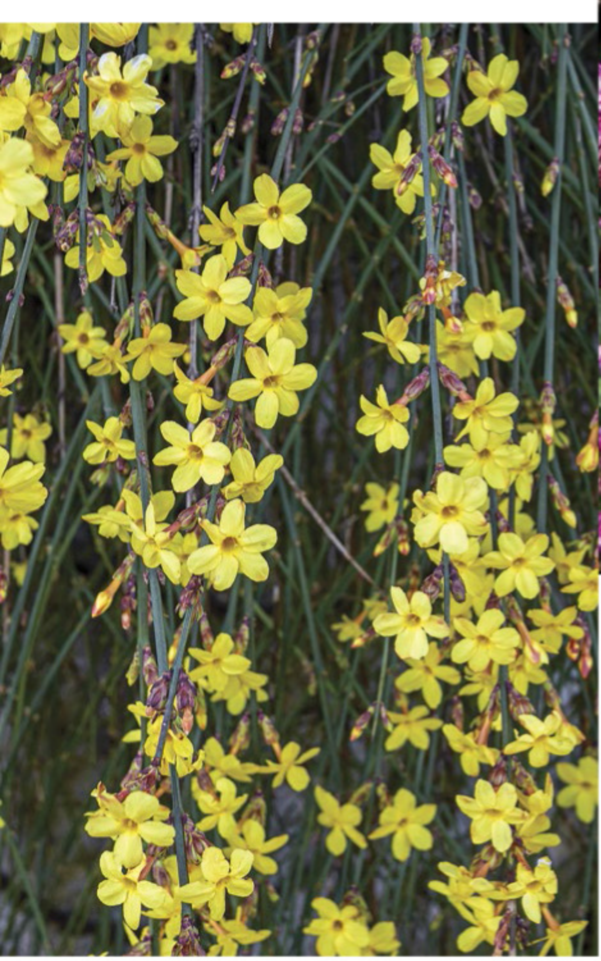
**While many favourite non-native plants such as roses, dahlias and hydrangeas take time out during winter, others are stepping up to put on a show!**

## TREE FUCHSIA

### (*Fuchsia arborescens*)

This graceful evergreen shrub produces clusters of bright pink flowers of varying shades, which look like fireworks bursting out of the plant's glossy mid-green leaves. Edible blueberry-like berries follow. Native to Central America, it can be trained into a small 'tree' or pruned occasionally and kept compact. Thriving in well-drained soil and semi-shade, it forms an attractive backdrop in a wide bed or near a fence or wall. It grows 1–3m high and wide, and suits cool temperate and warm temperate climates.





## WINTER JASMINE

### (*Jasminum nudiflorum*)

Prized for its profusion of brilliant yellow flowers, this deciduous shrub is named *yingchun* in its native China, which means 'the flower that welcomes spring'. Blooms are dotted along willowy leafless branches before its green trifoliate leaves appear. It can be clipped into a semi-formal hedge, be trained as a vine, or sprawl down embankments or retaining walls. It thrives in reasonably fertile, well-drained soil in full sun to semi-shade. Growing 1.2–3m high, it suits subtropical, semi-arid, warm temperate and cool temperate climates.

## WINTER ROSE

### (*Helleborus* spp. and hybrids)

The delightful cup-shaped flowers of these small, evergreen herbaceous perennials are what make this plant a firm favourite. There's a diversity of colours, including shades of pink, purple, white and green, with double and speckled forms, and some have wavy petals. Hellebores won't tolerate afternoon sun, and they perform best under deciduous trees or evergreens with light foliage that provide dappled light. They are low maintenance and thrive in well-drained fertile soil. Growing 40–60cm high and 40–60cm wide, they suit cool temperate, warm temperate and semi-arid climates.

## WINTER ACONITE

### (*Eranthis hyemalis*)

Growing a petite 15cm tall, this charming European woodland perennial is best in a spot where its cheery flowers can be appreciated. A member of the buttercup family, its golden-yellow bee-attracting blooms are highlighted by a leafy 'collar'. It's ideal planted along the edge of a path, dotted through a rockery or allowed to naturalise with other woodland charmers underneath deciduous shrubs or trees. Every part of the plant is poisonous to mammals, including people. It suits cool temperate and warm temperate climates.

## WINTER DAPHNE

### (*Daphne odora*)

Growing 1m tall and wide, this shrub has glossy mid-green leaves (a variegated form has cream edges) that become smothered in clusters of pink buds. These open into white to pink starry flowers with a strong perfume that wafts around the garden or – as a cut flower – your home. Red berries follow. Plant it close to a window or door. It prefers a cool temperate to warm temperate climate.

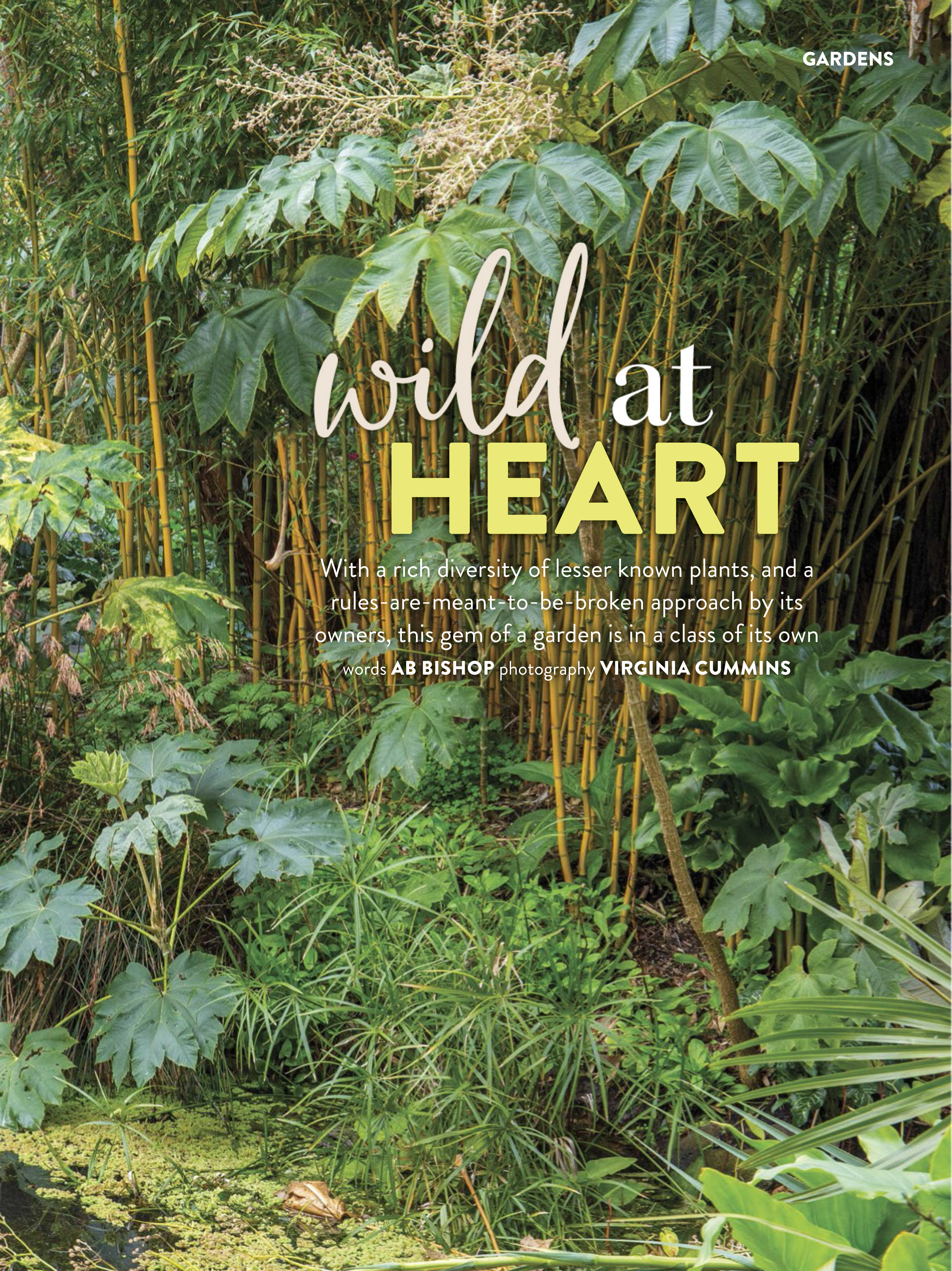
## DROUGHT TOLERANT IRIS

### (*Iris unguicularis*)

This evergreen perennial produces fragrant flowers in mottled shades of lavender, blue and white that butterflies adore, appearing from late autumn until early spring. It has long, leathery arching leaves that form a clump up to 50cm wide. It's not fussy about soil and is suitable for coastal gardens. Best displayed in drifts or in odd numbers in pots, it grows 30–40cm tall and suits cool temperate, warm temperate and semi-arid climates. It also has a clone called Algerian iris that is commonly grown in gardens.

**PHOTOS** ISTOCK, GAP PHOTOS/CAROLE DRAKE

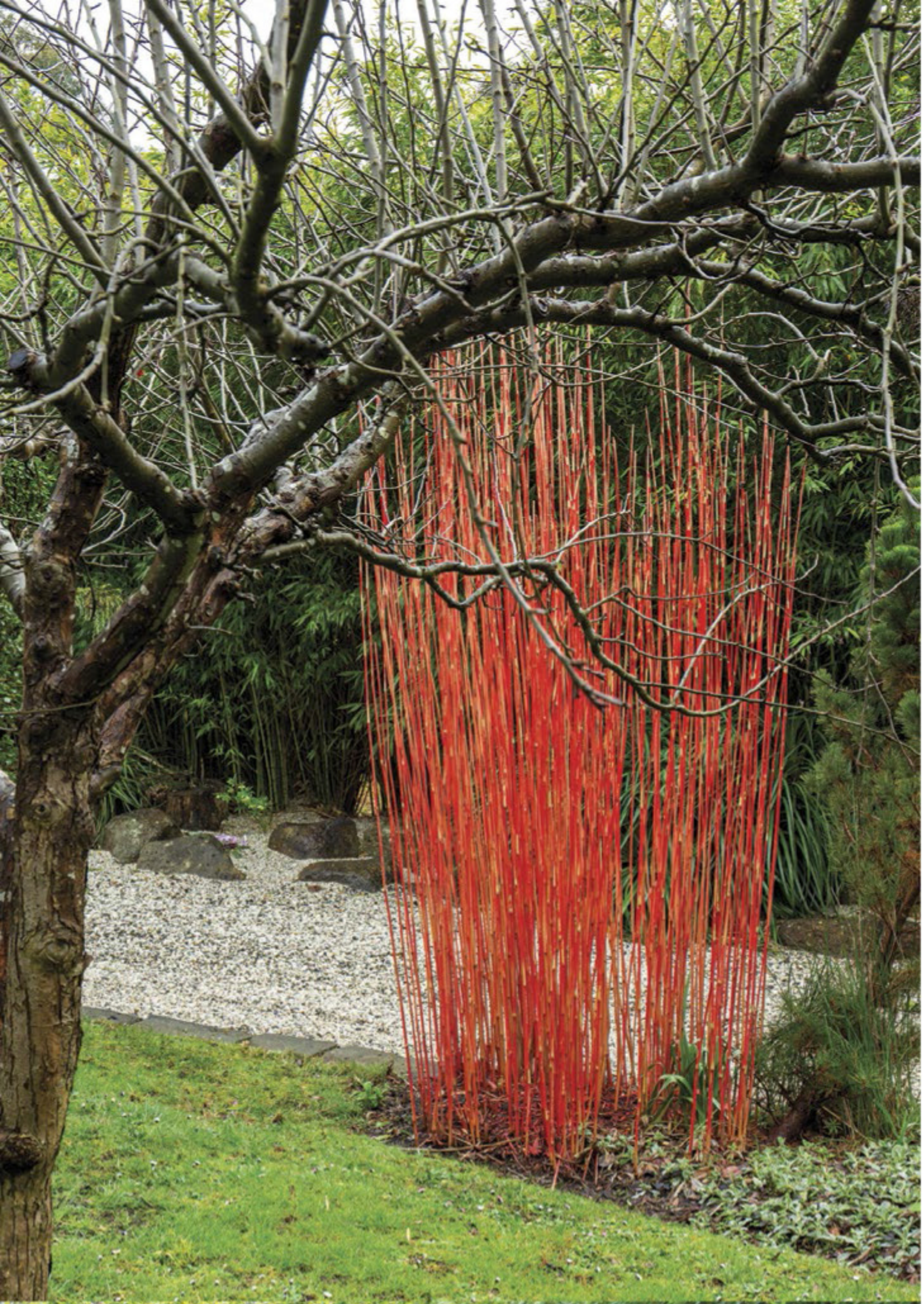
Garden owner and horticulturist Stephen Ryan on the jetty of one of the two ornamental ponds in his woodland-inspired garden. He loves the nearby variegated *Tetrapanax*, which contributes to the garden's layered tropical look.



# wild at HEART

With a rich diversity of lesser known plants, and a rules-are-meant-to-be-broken approach by its owners, this gem of a garden is in a class of its own

words **AB BISHOP** photography **VIRGINIA CUMMINS**



The cool-climate woodland-style garden of Stephen Ryan and Craig Lidgerwood in Macedon, Victoria, is a horticultural delight. Every nook and cranny is jammed with plants, creating a pleasing juxtaposition of shapes, colours and textures. Vertical and horizontal layers of delicate to robust foliage provide year-round interest, while at every level, brash or modest blooms offer seasonal embellishment.

Named 'Tugurium', the garden feels wonderfully wild, but not in a need-a-machete-to-hack-your-way-through kind of way, as snaking gravelled paths allow easy exploration around the thoughtfully designed 0.5ha property. The paths wind past the picture-book cedar cottage and around two ornamental ponds, a vegie patch, a quirky shed, a perennial border and a small lawn with fruit trees.

"Most paths are circuits, as I dislike dead ends in a garden," says Stephen, a horticulturist and previous host of *Gardening Australia* on ABC TV. "We open the garden as part of the Open Gardens Victoria program, and I advise visitors to walk *both* ways around the garden because each direction offers something different."

It's hard to picture the original block that Stephen bought in 1985. It had no topsoil, plenty of weeds and a handful of scruffy blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*) and messmate (*Eucalyptus obliqua*) trees.

It suited the knowledgeable plantsman initially to *not* develop a garden. He was too busy with his nursery, Dicksonia Rare Plants, while also maintaining the grounds of some of Macedon's historical properties, which he knew well, having moved to the area with his family as a child. But then, ►

**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT**
An Indian cedar (*Cedrus deodara*) in the initial stages of being cloud pruned; guests are often perplexed by this sight – the rigid stems of giant miscanthus (*Miscanthus* x *giganteus*), which Stephen strips of foliage and paints red; woodland plantings here include hellebores, western wild ginger and two purple-leafed *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Tom Thumb' shrubs.

when a local resident expressed surprise that he hadn't created a garden, Stephen says, "the gauntlet was thrown down!"

He knew he wanted a "wild woodland garden" featuring plants from all over the world. However, to sustain the types of beauties that he wanted to grow, the existing hard clay first needed drastic improvement. Using a crowbar, Stephen dug a series of 40cm-deep trenches across the entire block, filling them with kitchen scraps, lawn clippings, deciduous leaves, manure and spent potting mix.

Next, he mapped out the paths, which provided the position and shape of the large beds. Eventually, the experimenting began. "I used to be fanatical about azaleas and rhododendrons, but my taste changed – maybe, in part, from all our travelling – and now I prefer an exotic, tropical look."

Climate change, the Millennium Drought, plant maturation and Craig's invaluable input all played a role in the garden's evolution. Nowadays, various species of palm, bamboo, *Sambucus*, *Acanthus*, *Berberis* and other strong foliage plants are thriving, as are cyclamens, hellebores, a diversity of dainty bulbs, and a plethora of other gorgeous woodland plants.

The couple work together in the garden on Wednesdays, and whenever else they have spare time, as there's always plenty to do. "Although it's a relaxed-looking garden and many people think it doesn't need much care, it's really hard work," says Stephen. "We're forever nipping and tucking, mulching, feeding and watering. It's definitely *not* low maintenance!"

While Craig can often feel overwhelmed by the garden, seeing the chores more than its beauty, he's grateful to live in such an ►

**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT**
Craig with Aster, one of the couple's two corgis; hellebores add their special charm and colours to the garden's greenery; mulched or gravel paths meander through the garden, allowing access to garden beds, ponds and the vegie patch; the shed has a charming succulent roof, made using a frame, geotextile fabric and potting mix to plant the succulents in.

EVERY NOOK IS JAMMED WITH PLANTS, CREATING A JUXTAPOSITION OF SHAPES, COLOURS AND TEXTURES.

environment. “Whenever we return from travelling, I reflect on how green and cool it is. In summer, it’s 3–4 degrees cooler than the surrounding areas.”

The garden is also a constant source of inspiration for Craig, an acclaimed botanical artist, whose work explores the details of the natural world, featuring plants both common and rare.

Although they grow mostly non-native plants, the garden is busy with all sorts of critters. “We rarely use chemicals and often refresh the soil and mulch, so there’s lots of insect activity which, together with all the nectar and spiky plants, brings in the birds,” says Stephen. “Plenty of animals make a living out of our garden!”

Most of the tree fruit is devoured by parrots and possums, but the vegie patch is less popular with wildlife, so Stephen and Craig have plenty of greens, herbs, rhubarb, sweetcorn, garlic and globe and Jerusalem artichokes.

To develop such an intriguing garden takes expertise, judgement and some risk-taking audacity. “I love the concept of zone denial,” laughs Stephen. “I want my garden to flourish, but I’m prepared to push the boundaries with what I can grow. I don’t want to grow the obvious and predictable, so I often have failures, but they provide gaps for something new.”

Although the avid collector perfectly understands the design ‘rules’ of mass and void, he sees the latter as a waste of space. “My single rule in the garden is to grow only one variegated plant within an area or the space becomes too busy,” he says. “I also believe that we should all remember to enjoy our gardens. In the mornings, I’ll wander around with a cup of coffee, and in the evenings with a glass of wine. I might pull the occasional weed, but I try not to engage in a job. I use all our seats and simply sit and contemplate!”

**Tugurium opens once a year through Open Gardens Victoria; for more info, visit opengardensvictoria.org.au** GA

CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE
Visiting wildlife prefer stone fruit and apples, leaving the Seville oranges, which are given to a neighbour to make marmalade; the front woodland garden is full of ivy-leafed cyclamen, berberis and bamboo; Stephen trims a variegated box, which provides structure when other plants die down over winter; this hermaphrodite form of butcher's broom (*Ruscus aculeatus*) thrives in deep shade.

# team green

PHOTOS WILLOW CREATIVE

### For this budding horticulturist, flowers are nice, but foliage plants really bring on the feels, writes AB BISHOP

Maya Quin was on a school excursion as a five-year-old when she realised just how much she loved plants. "There was a line of smooth-barked eucalyptus trees that were so nice to touch. I hugged each one saying, 'I love you, tree'."

Now 16, Maya's fascination with plants is unwavering. She enthusiastically tends the family's Mornington Peninsula garden with her dad, devours gardening books from cover to cover and, as I'm sure most gardeners will appreciate, drools at the sight of a pile of soil or mulch.

It's fair to say, however, that indoor foliage plants have her heart, and not just because her favourite colour is green.

"I know my indoor plants individually, and although I love flowers and their big personalities, my preference is for leafy plants," she says. "They're more subtle about what they have to offer, and they don't boast about it. I feel closer to indoor foliage plants – they look good all year and give off a different vibe than flowers." ►

FROM OPPOSITE
Maya with a satin pothos (*Scindapsus pictus*) and a trailing devil's ivy in a self-watering pot; Maya's bedroom is filled with a variety of beautiful indoor plants, including monsteras and a maidenhair fern.

“MY PLANTS ALL HAVE DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES, AND WHEN I WATER THEM, I CAN TELL THEY’RE HAPPY.”

It was a single monstera that Maya received on her eighth birthday that fuelled her passion. The gift was from her parents, Andy and Jason, who were keen to nurture her obvious love of the natural world after they found a stash of butterfly wings, pebbles, seed pods, shells and sticks under her bed.

“I was so happy because I didn’t know you could keep plants indoors! It was the first plant that I had in my bedroom.”

Eight years on, the monstera is thriving, along with its progeny dotted about the house. “They produce aerial roots at the nodes, so I chop off the stem at that point and either put them into water or stick them in potting mix and they grow.”

Nowadays, that first plant is simply one of an ever-expanding crowd, and a “funky” purple alocasia is the latest kid on the block. While Maya admits that its “really cool leaves” were partly what drew her to it, her selection criteria for plants is more discerning now. “There’s not much light in this room and there’s a lot of humidity because I mist the plants every day, so I wouldn’t grow succulents in here. I research where a plant comes from and what conditions they like, and I tend to choose tropical plants.”

She prefers plain, self-watering pots in neutral colours that allow the foliage to stand out. Maya’s care routine for all her plants includes a twice-monthly ‘spa day’, when all residents are taken outside for some extra TLC. “I use the shower setting on the hose to soak the soil, and then the mister on their leaves. Next, I wipe them all with a face washer to remove dust, then I trim off any dead foliage.”

It seems likely that Maya also benefits from these pampering sessions, as this is when she feels especially connected with her plants. “They all have different personalities and energy, and when I water them, I can tell they’re happy.”

Her feeding regime is less regular. “People say you should feed them every 2–4 weeks, but I fertilise with worm wee, liquid food or pellets every 2–3 months and they all seem to be doing fine!”

Maya has learnt the nuances of each plant, and adjusts potting mix accordingly when it’s time to re-pot, adding perlite or coir peat. “Monsteras prefer a well-drained ‘barky’ type mix rather than a soil-based mix, because in the wild they grow by attaching themselves to trees.”

Although she has never been one to play favourites, Maya has a particularly good relationship with her maidenhair fern. “It was my second plant ever, and although maidenhairs can sometimes be hard to take care of, I’ve kept mine alive for over six years. When you get ferns to look good, it’s so rewarding.”

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT
Maya has cared for her maidenhair fern for six years; Maya's polka dot begonia (*Begonia maculata*); misting a tree philodendron; as well as feeding her passion for indoor plants, Maya loves helping with her family's garden; she uses worm wee to fertilise her plants.

**PHOTOS** WILLOW CREATIVE

Maya uses a wide range of products, depending on what she can afford or is given. "I usually buy everything myself, so I don't choose the most expensive because I'm on a tight budget! I buy young plants, as they're cheaper, and grow the little guys on."

She's often gifted plants for birthdays and Christmas, and her ever-expanding wishlist is always shared with her family. Unfortunately, nobody understands the list because the plant enthusiast uses botanical names only!

Maya's love of the natural world runs in the family. Her younger brother, Darby, loves birds, and her maternal grandfather studied botany and discovered an orchid in Papua New Guinea. Maya intends to study plants one day too, and her preferred area of expertise comes as no surprise to those who know her.

"I love flowers, but if I could choose only one area of study, I'd choose indoor and outdoor foliage plants. Maybe that's because my favourite colour is green!"

# A CUT ABOVE

Don't be afraid to wield those secateurs and tame your plants, urges **JENNIFER STACKHOUSE,** who shares her tips on how to get started on your winter prune

Pruning is hugely beneficial for the plant that's getting the chop – and rewarding for the gardener, too! It can increase flowering, improve the shape and density of a plant, remove dead or diseased wood, and bring a plant down to a manageable size. Not all plants need regular pruning, but many do. Winter is a good time to give deciduous plants a hard prune. At the top of my winter pruning list are hydrangeas, roses and grapevines.

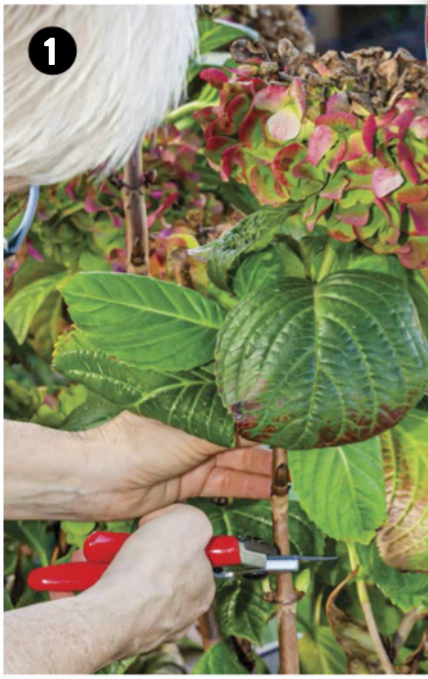
## HYDRANGEAS

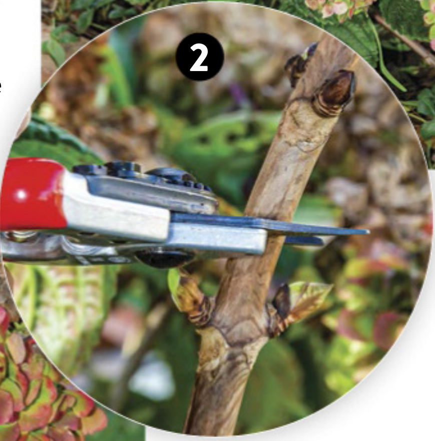
### (*Hydrangea macrophylla*)

These summer-blooming deciduous shrubs are easy to prune and a great starter plant if you've never pruned before. It's lucky that they're easy, as we have hundreds growing in our cool-climate Tasmanian garden. Hydrangeas produce pairs of plump bright green buds along their stems, which are easy to see once the plant has lost its old leaves. These give rise to flowering wood and produce the summer flower show.

**Tools for the job** Sharp secateurs

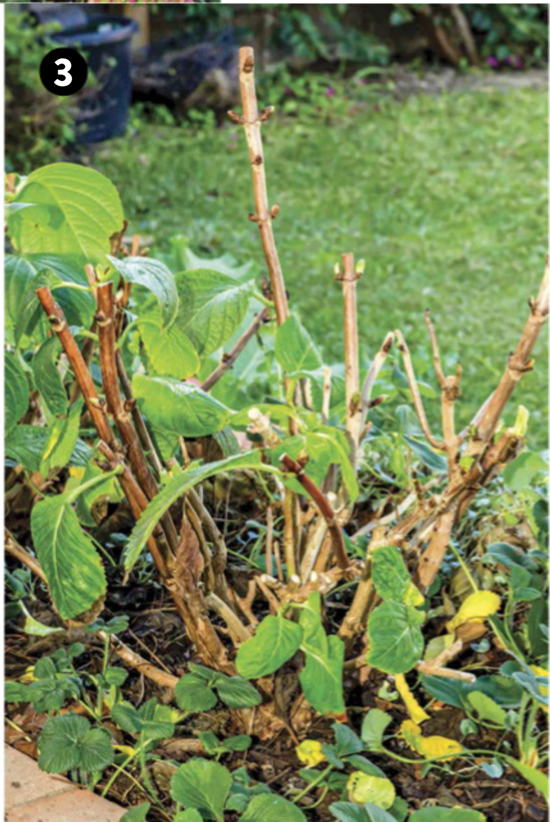
**Step 1** Select flowered stems and examine each one for pairs of plump green buds, leaving plenty of buds below the cut.





**Step 2** Cut each stem just above the fattest pair of buds. Cutting back too hard may reduce flowering but revitalises old woody plants.

**Step 3** Remove all of the old woody growth at ground level to make room for new shoots. Leave stems that didn't flower on the shrub (they won't have a spent flower head), as they will bloom in summer. ►



### GOOD HYGIENE

The blades of pruning tools can spread diseases. For good hygiene, sterilise blades using a mild disinfectant (tea-tree oil, bleach or antiseptic). Wipe with the disinfectant before starting work and before moving to another plant.

**PHOTOS** GAP PHOTOS, BRENT WILSON, ISTOCK

## SHARPEN BLADES

Sharp blades make clean cuts that are less likely to damage the plant or harbour diseases. Sharpen blades before pruning (do it yourself or take them to a specialist knife sharpener) or fit secateurs with new blades, if this is an option. Replace blades if damaged or difficult to sharpen.

## ROSES (Hybrid Tea)

Roses are hard-pruned in winter and are on most gardeners' to-do lists. July is the ideal time to prune roses in most areas, but in very cold zones, especially those subject to late frosts, leave your pruning until the end of winter. The aim is to remove about half to two-thirds of last season's growth to encourage new growth, as this will produce flowers in spring and summer. Pruning is also an opportunity to remove diseased branches and those that cross over each other.

**Tools for the job** Stout gloves, long sleeves, sharp secateurs, a pruning saw and/or loppers, a bin to capture prunings (to avoid double handling thorny branches)

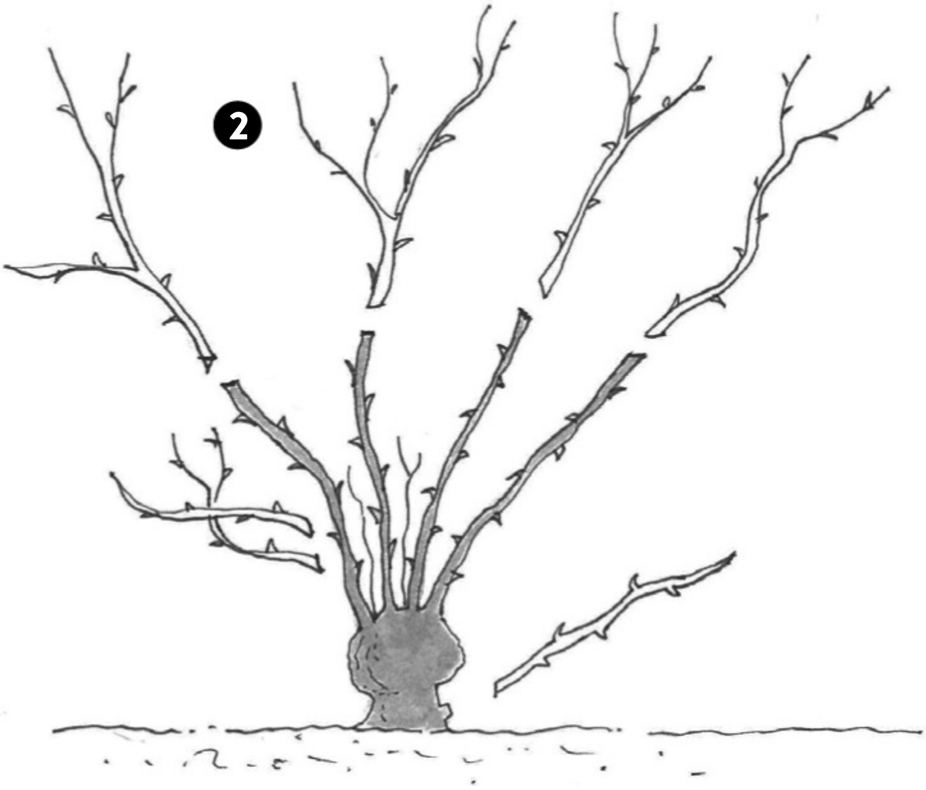
**Step 1** Give your rose bushes an all-over cut. Bending tall branches towards you makes it easier to make clean cuts.

**Step 2** Identify a framework of three to five strong, healthy branches and remove any other stems (especially old, grey wood) at the base of the plant. Use a pruning saw or loppers for thick wood. Remove branches growing from ground level (below the graft) as they are sprouting from the root stock. Leave bright red new growth – these are water shoots that renew the rose.

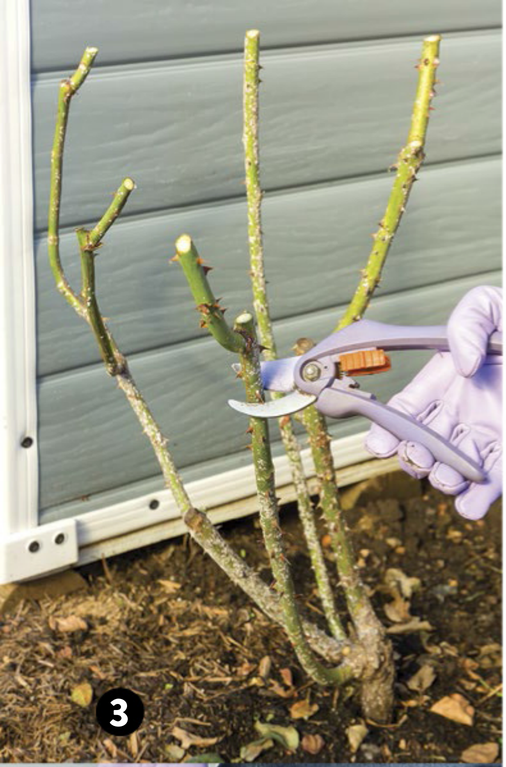
**Step 3** Go over the bush, cutting back the framework branches. Make clean cuts just above an outward-facing node (the bump on the stem where new leafy growth is produced) on each branch.

**Step 4** Pick up all fallen prunings and diseased leaves and dispose of them.

**Step 5** Apply a protective spray of lime sulfur over your pruned rose to target overwintering pests and diseases. This must be done before the new growth appears, as lime burns new growth.



**PHOTOS** ISTOCK, BRENT WILSON, ANNA HUTCHCROFT **ILLUSTRATION** DIANNE BRADLEY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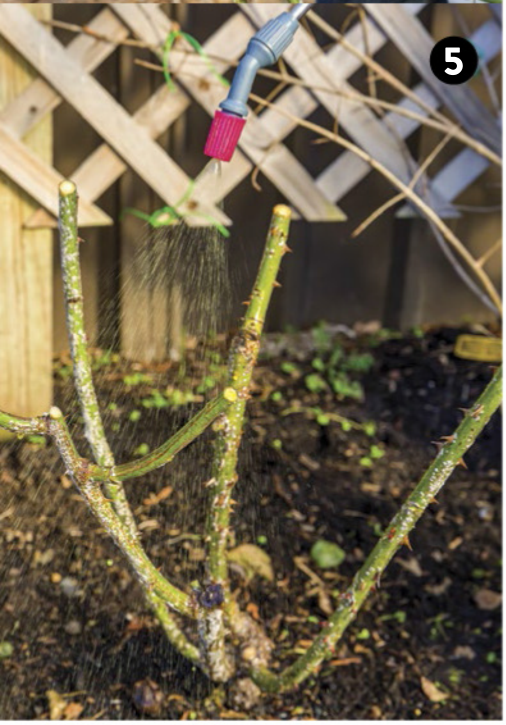
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## ORNAMENTAL GRAPEVINES

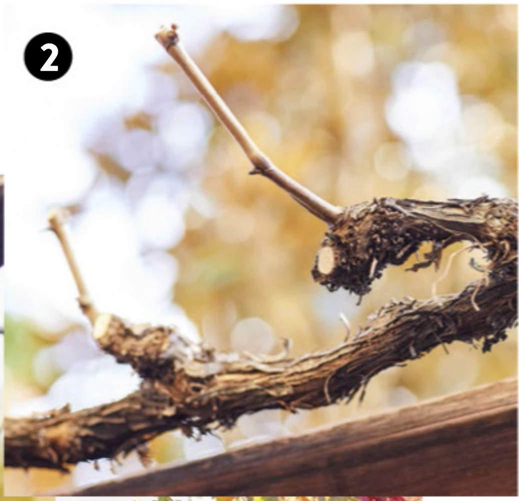
A popular climber for covering pergolas, ornamental grapevines provide summer shade and are enjoyed for their bold crimson leaf colour in autumn. The aim of the winter prune with these plants is to remove last season's growth, leaving the woody framework of the vine. Grapes are vigorous and need a hard cut back in winter to remove congested growth.

Fruiting grapes are also pruned during winter, cutting back any stems that have produced fruit. Shorten them back to the framework of the trellis, leaving either long horizontal branches with buds or shorter branches with spurs, to produce new growth for next year's harvest.

**Tools for the job** Secateurs, a sturdy ladder (for plants on pergolas)

**Step 1** Cut back last year's growth, being sure to leave small stems with new buds along the framework of branches growing over the pergola. In areas with late frosts, delay pruning until late winter.

**Step 2** Identify old versus new growth. Old growth is grey and may have flaky bark, while new growth is smooth and brown. Don't cut into old growth or the framework you've created to train the vine across the pergola. Long, flexible stems that are removed can be used to make wreaths, baskets or ornaments. ▶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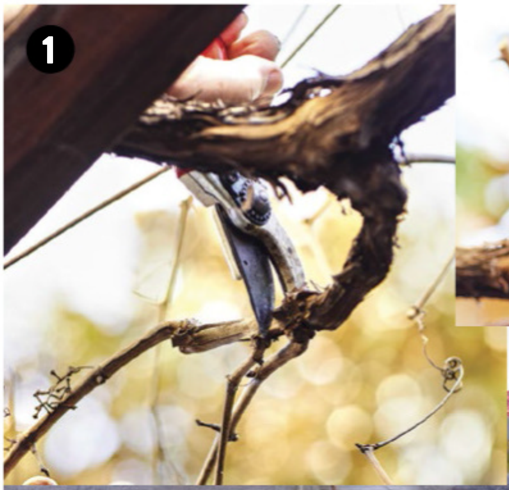
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snips + tips

**HERE ARE SOME PRUNING DOS AND DON'TS FROM ABC *GARDENING AUSTRALIA* PRESENTERS**

Josh 'fine pruning' a trellised fig tree midwinter to reduce congestion.

## fruitful changes

The old guidelines for pruning deciduous fruit trees have been rewritten, says **JOSH BYRNE**

"Back in the day, winter was the main time for pruning deciduous fruit trees," says *Gardening Australia*'s Western Australian presenter based in Perth/Whadjuk Country. "The thinking was that, with the trees being dormant, pruning would cause them less harm. But times have changed, and deciduous fruit trees are now routinely pruned much earlier in the season, following fruiting.

"The main objective of pruning is to reduce the canopy of the tree to make its size and shape more manageable. As the trees are still active in autumn, the wounds from pruning cuts heal more quickly at this time of year, reducing the risk of disease.

"Some pruning in winter is still needed, but it's more finessed. With trees bare of leaves, it's easy to see what wood, spurs and buds need to be kept for successful fruit production, and which bits can be removed to reduce congestion. It's one of my favourite winter jobs – especially trellised trees, where the task feels like a coming together of art and horticulture."

## getting in shape

Think branch structure and avoid leggy leftovers, says **SOPHIE THOMSON** (Adelaide Hills/Peramangk Country)

**Q What will you prune this year?** Fruit trees, grapevines and wisteria, and canopies of a few deciduous trees.

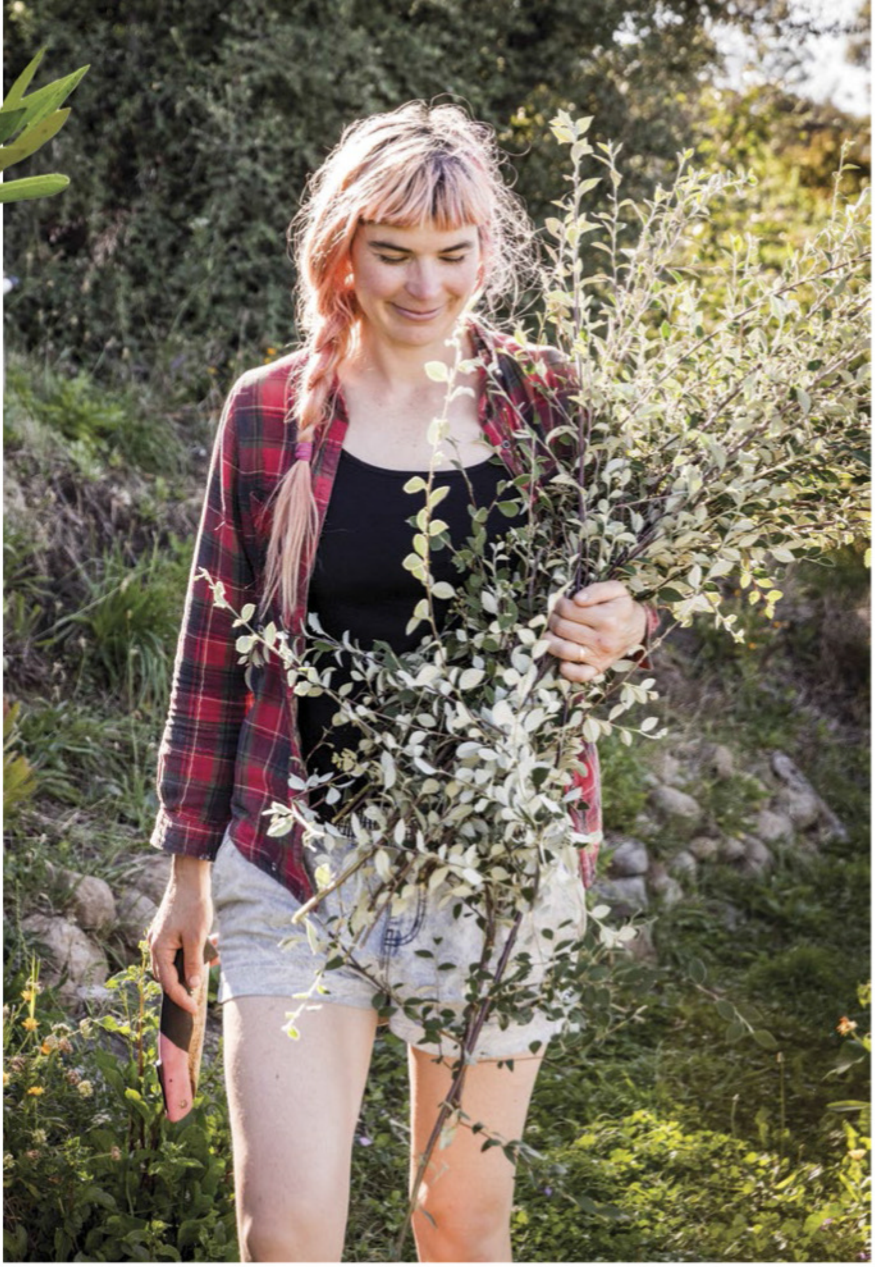
**Q When is the key time for pruning in your area?** Fruit trees get pruned in summer to reduce their vigour and in winter to shape them when young. Most shrubs get pruned after flowering.

**Q Favourite tree or shrub you enjoy pruning?** Tree dahlias, which can be up to 5m high and get slaughtered down to almost ground level, giving you thick bamboo-like canes, which can be cut up and shared with others.

**Q Cautionary tale about pruning?** When purchasing bare-rooted plants, always read the label and prune hard accordingly. Often people spend ages choosing the largest bare-rooted fruit tree, they take it home, plant it without pruning, and then it struggles or dies. If it lives, it grows huge and leggy, without a good branch structure down low. Bare-rooted plants have up to 90 per cent of their roots cut off when they're dug up from the paddock, so the idea of pruning is to compensate for the root loss and give them the best start. It also encourages the best branch structure.

**Q Words of advice?** In general, prune shrubs once a year after flowering, from year one. This early pruning creates a good structure and dense growth. Most people leave them for a few years and they get leggy, then it's hard to keep them compact.

**Q Favourite pruning tool?** PowerGear secateurs with a rolling handle.



## do your homework...

Timing and research are as important as having the right tool for the job, says **HANNAH MOLONEY** (Hobart/Muwinina Country)

**Q What will you prune this year?** Our large mixed orchard, which includes stone fruit (plums, nectarines, cherries, apricots and almonds) as well as apple, olive and quince trees.

**Q When is the key time for pruning in your area?** I like to prune all my fruit trees in autumn because it keeps the trees compact, whereas pruning in winter encourages more growth.

**Q Favourite tree or shrub you enjoy pruning?** I quite love pruning olive trees, as they're a gorgeous shape year-round with their evergreen foliage.

**Q Cautionary tale about pruning?** I made some impressive mistakes back when I was first learning how to prune. The most painful one was the time when I unknowingly removed most of the fruiting spurs from an apple tree. I still wince with pain at the memory! Even though I learnt my lesson quick-smart, I still get nervous pruning my apple trees!

**Q Words of advice?** If you're unsure of the best pruning method to use for your trees, take five minutes to research before you start with your pruning. There are some particular rules to follow for different trees, and that five minutes of research could save you some tears!

**Q Favourite pruning tool?** Nothing beats a nice sharp pruning saw, except perhaps an electric chainsaw to make those bigger jobs easier!

## bring on the blooms

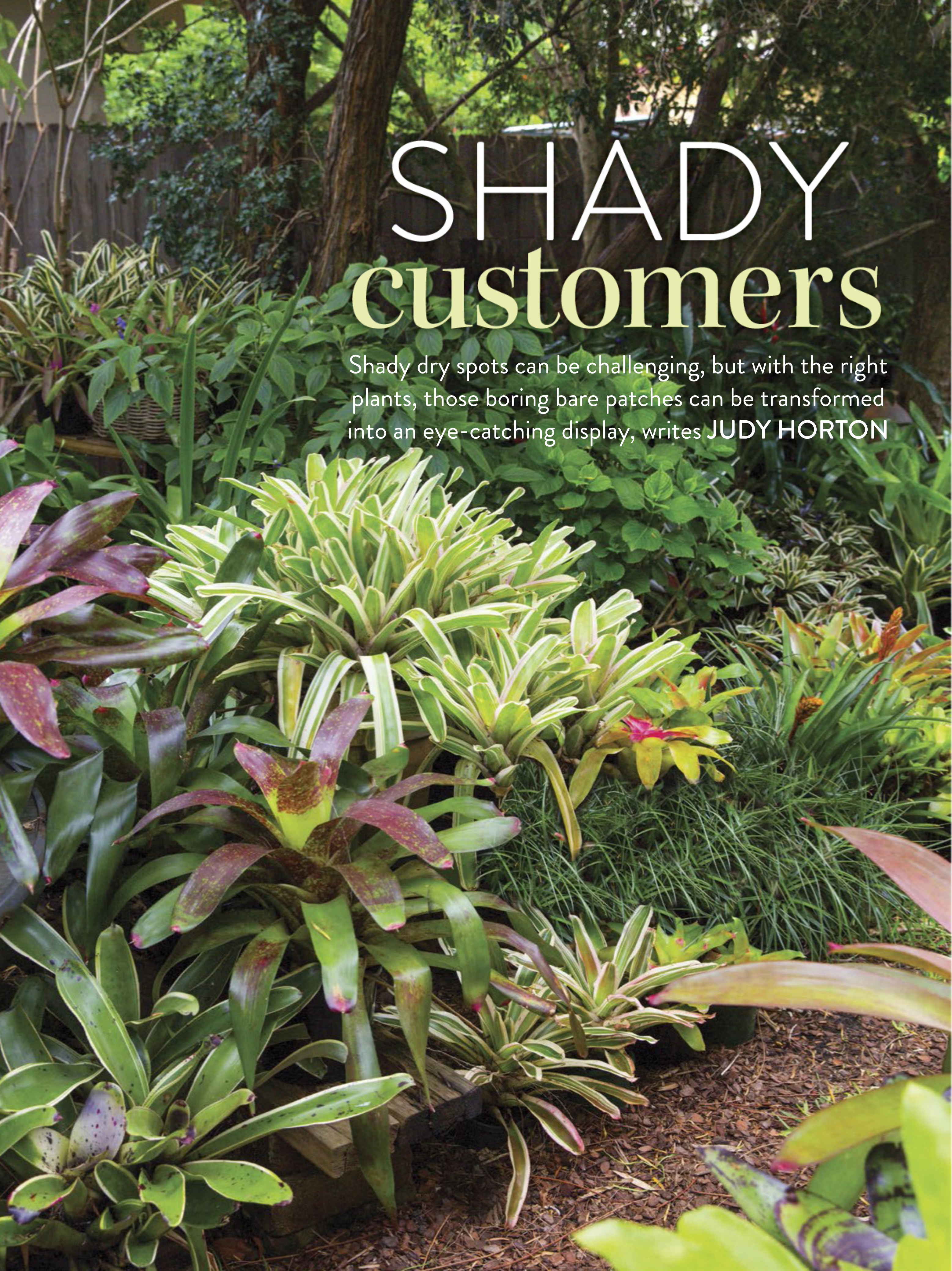
**JANE EDMANSON** (Melbourne/Boon Wurrung, Bunurong & Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country) says crepe myrtle is one of her favourite trees to prune

"My crepe myrtle is 4–5m tall and always needs pruning around July. Last year, I pruned it later and it was still flowering in April this year," says Jane (pictured, below, pruning coleus). "Crepe myrtles flower on new wood, and if you don't prune, you end up with less flowers. Pruning makes them look a bit 'sticky', but that only lasts until new growth appears in spring, with flowers coming after that.

"There are different ways to prune crepe myrtle, depending on where they are grown. Mine has 5–6 trunks and I just take off the top third. In smaller spaces, the tree can be thinned out by removing some trunks but allowing them to branch out as they get higher.

"My favourite winter tool? A pair of secateurs, of course!"

**PHOTOS** LUKE SIMON, ROBERT FRITH/ACORN PHOTO, ISTOCK, NATALIE MENDHAM, VIRGINIA CUMMINS



# SHADY customers

Shady dry spots can be challenging, but with the right plants, those boring bare patches can be transformed into an eye-catching display, writes **JUDY HORTON**

Some of the most challenging positions in the garden are those spots under trees where understorey plants need to cope with ever-deepening shade and increasing root competition. Some trees even add to the indignity by dropping leaf litter all over the specimens below. So, what's the best solution for these tricky spots?

One practical but rather dull answer is to admit defeat, remove the struggling specimens and replace them with a layer of mulch. A better idea is to put thought into choosing plants that will handle the conditions. These need to be shade and drought tolerant, preferably with shallow roots that won't end up in a root war (we know which side would win!).

With careful plant selection you can transform a problem spot into a shady nook that becomes a new garden feature. Here are some ideas to get you started.

# GROUNDCOVERS

## GOODENIA

**(*Goodenia ovata* 'Gold Cover')**

This groundcover version of the popular native shrub has shiny green leaves and bright yellow blooms in the warmer months. It tolerates drought and light frost, and does well in medium shade. Trim long shoots when required.

## BROMELIADS

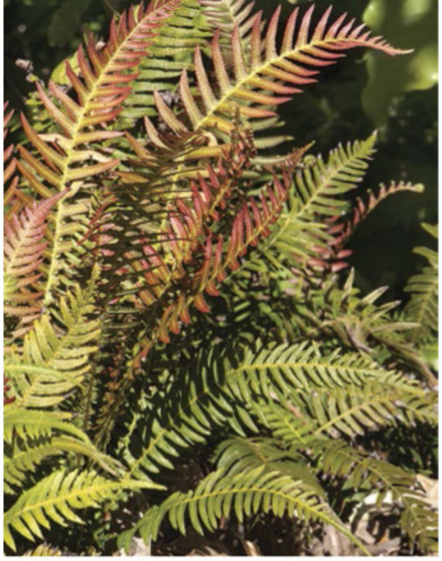
With compact root systems and shade tolerance, bromeliads are popular choices for under-canopy areas in warm climates. They can be placed into pots sunk into the soil or mulch, then swapped over when they need to be tidied or split. The options of different varieties are almost endless.

## JAPANESE SPURGE

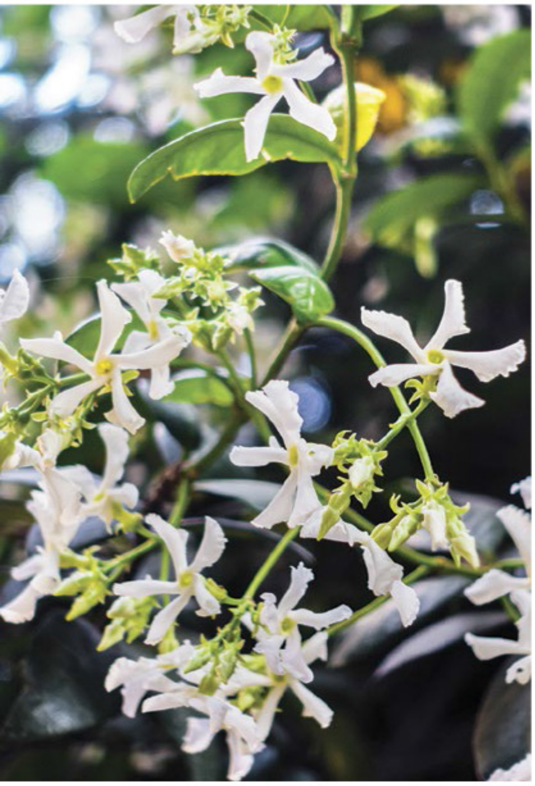
**(*Pachysandra terminalis*)**

Happiest in cool climates, this groundcover forms a spreading mass of attractive, rosette-style dark green leaves. It loves the shade and survives in poor or acidic soils. The slow-spreading rhizomes are easily controlled. ►

**PHOTOS** GAP PHOTOS/BRENT WILSON, ALAMY, RAMM BOTANICALS

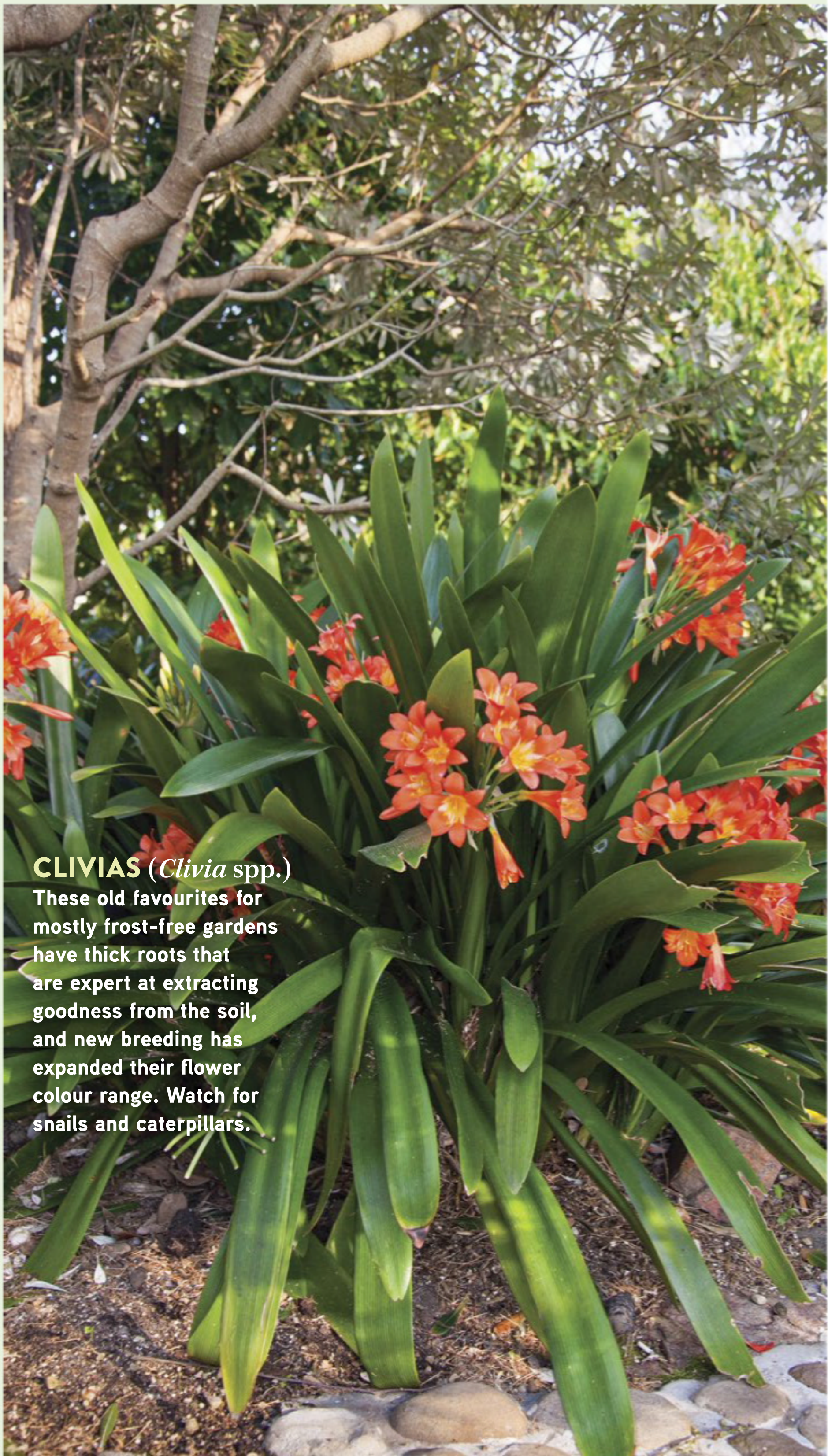


**RASP FERN**
**(*Doodia aspera*)**
Rasp fern grows naturally beneath trees in the Australian bush, and it handles drought once established. Attractive fronds morph from red new growth into a mature green. Another hardy native ground-covering fern is sickle fern (*Pellaea falcata*).

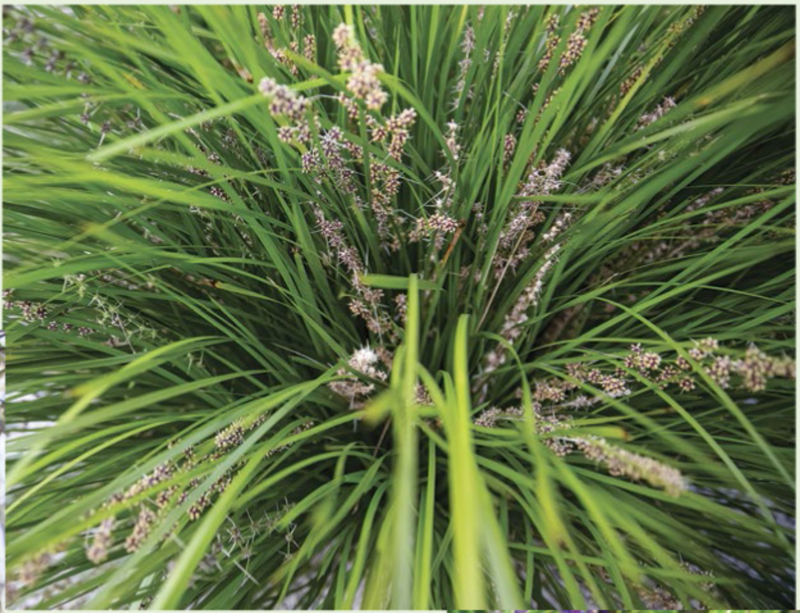


**ASIATIC STAR JASMINE**
**(*Trachelospermum asiaticum*)**
With smaller leaves and more cold tolerance than its cousin star jasmine (*T. jasminoides*), this tough and pretty plant can be trained to spread as a groundcover in the shade.

# STRAPPY-LEAFED PLANTS



**CLIVIAS (*Clivia* spp.)**
These old favourites for mostly frost-free gardens have thick roots that are expert at extracting goodness from the soil, and new breeding has expanded their flower colour range. Watch for snails and caterpillars.



## MAT RUSHES

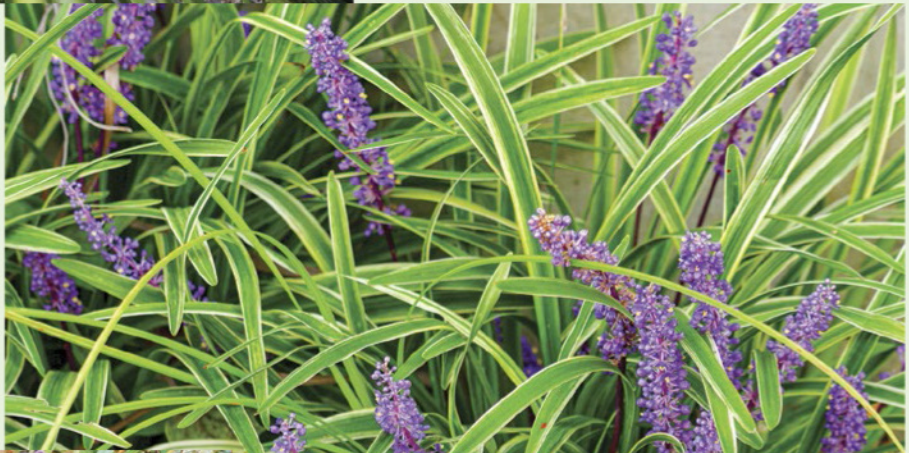
### (*Lomandra* spp.)

Australian native mat rushes are loved for their hardiness. For underplanting, it's best to choose smaller cultivars such as *L. confertifolia* 'Little Pal', which does well in shade, has attractive weeping foliage and only grows to about 50cm high.

## VARIEGATED LIRIOPE

### (*Liriope muscari* 'Variegata')

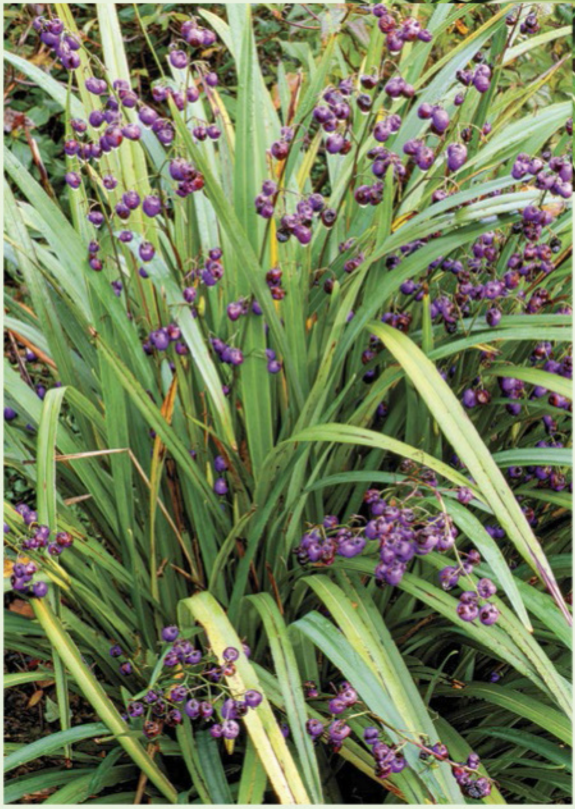
This clumping plant competes well with tree roots, and its variegated leaves add some light touches. The slow-spreading clumps can be easily split to produce more plants.



## FLAX LILIES

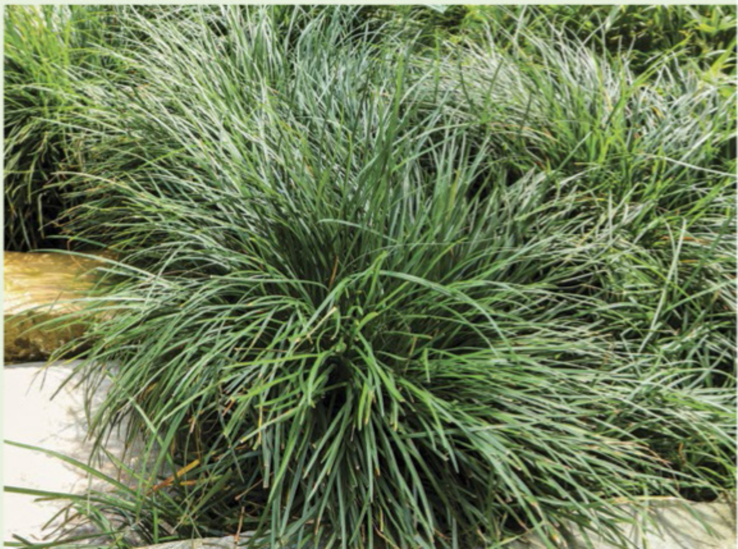
### (*Dianella* spp.)

The strap-like leaves of these Australian natives range from dark green to blue-grey to burgundy, and some have white stripes. Lower-growing varieties such as 'Little Jess' can be placed under trees. Small blue flowers are followed by shiny blue berries.



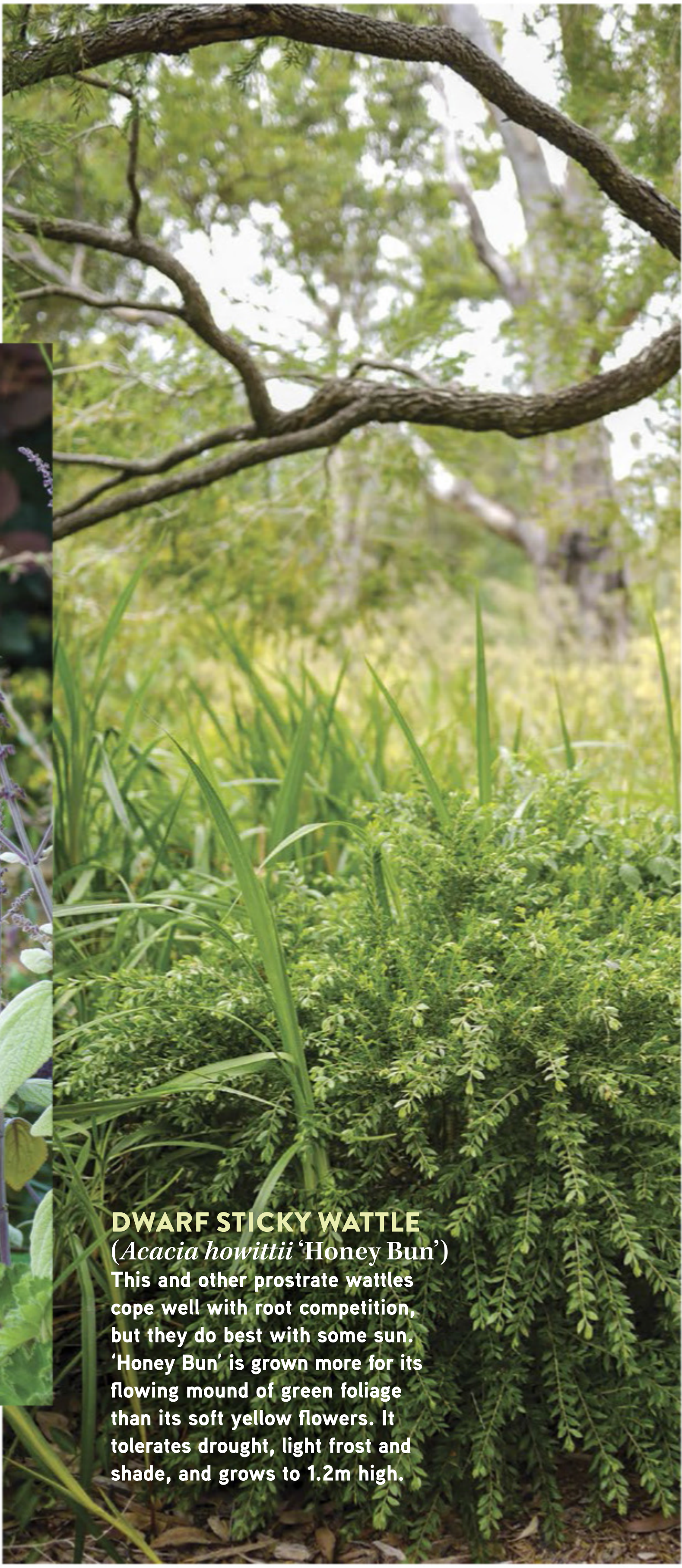
## MONDO GRASS (*Ophiopogon japonicus*)

Another clumper that loves shade, this plant's neat, uniform look makes it an excellent grass substitute under trees. Mini mondo is even more turf-like, but it's very slow growing. ►

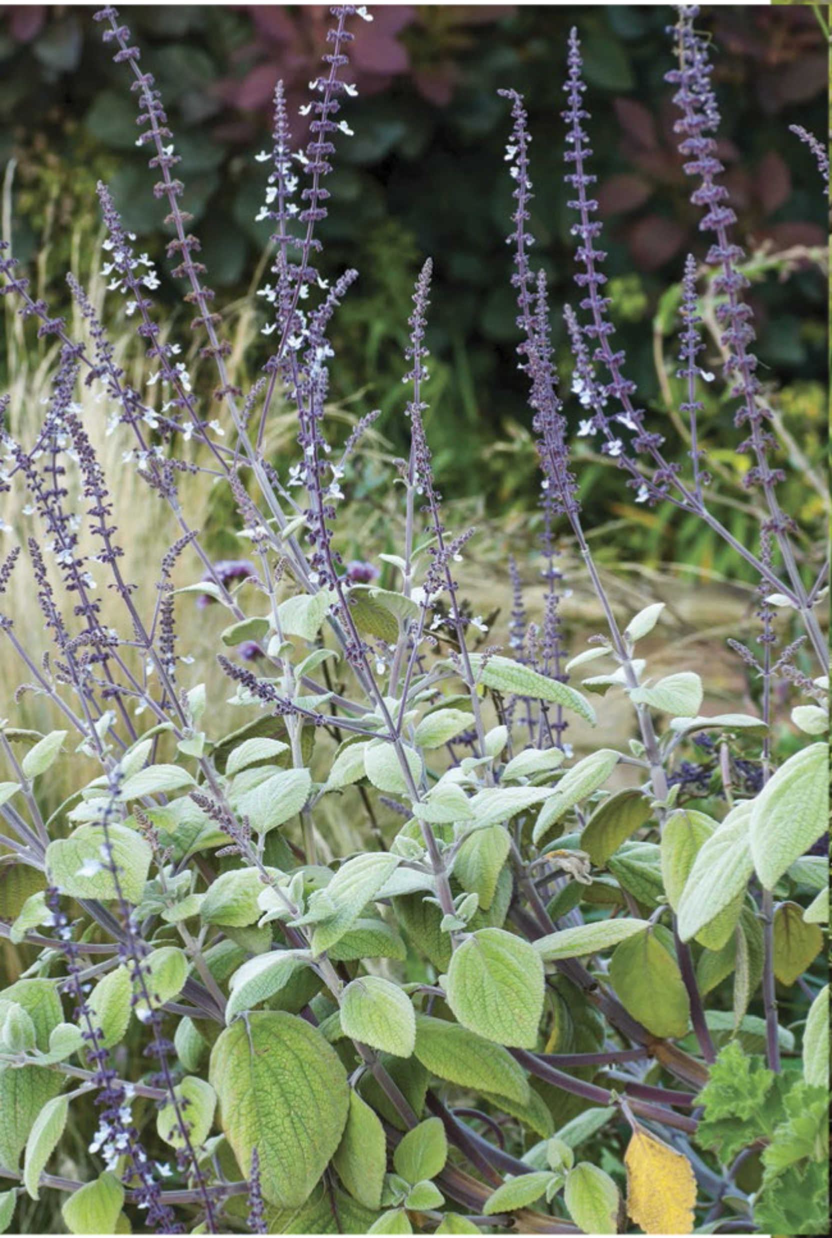


**PHOTOS** ISTOCK, GAP PHOTOS/LIZ EVERY, SHUTTERSTOCK, GAP PHOTOS/CLIVE NICHOLS

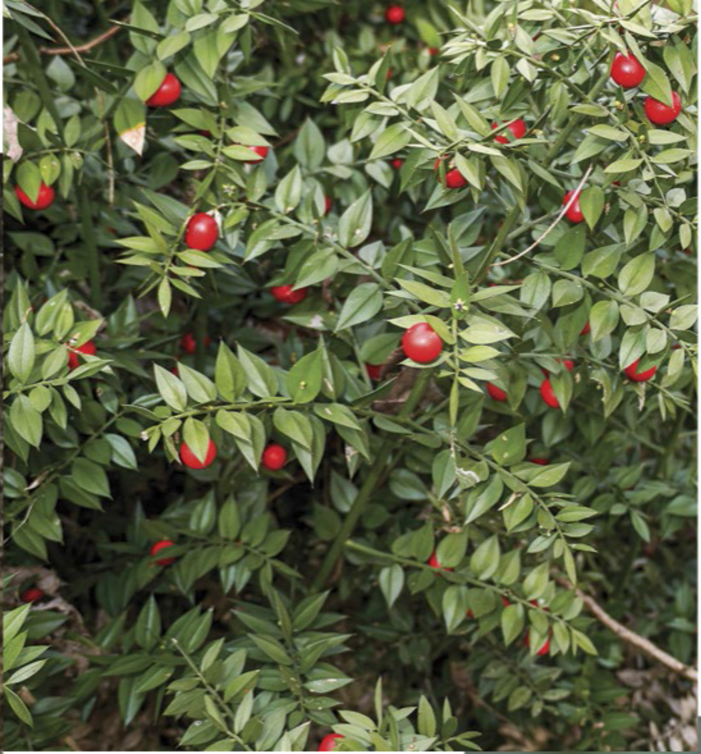
# SMALL SHRUBS & PERENNIALS



**DWARF STICKY WATTLE**
(*Acacia howittii* 'Honey Bun')
**This and other prostrate wattles cope well with root competition, but they do best with some sun. 'Honey Bun' is grown more for its flowing mound of green foliage than its soft yellow flowers. It tolerates drought, light frost and shade, and grows to 1.2m high.**



**COLEUS** (*Coleus argentatus* syn. *Plectranthus argentatus*)
This hardy Queensland and New South Wales native adds silver notes to the gloomiest spots. It tolerates salt, heat, shade, light frost and some drought.



## BUTCHER'S BROOM

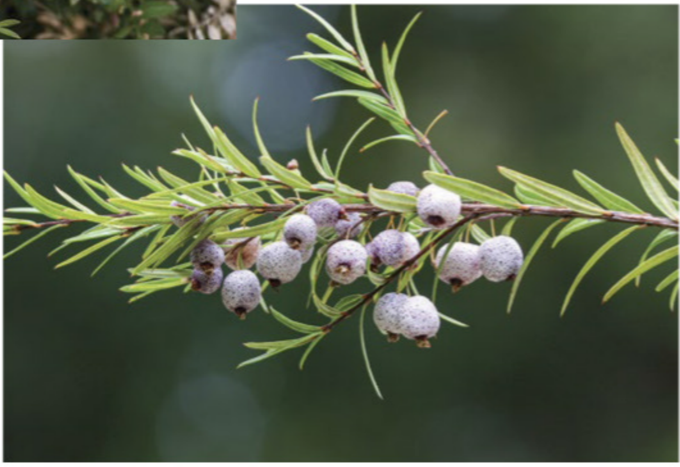
### (*Ruscus* spp.)

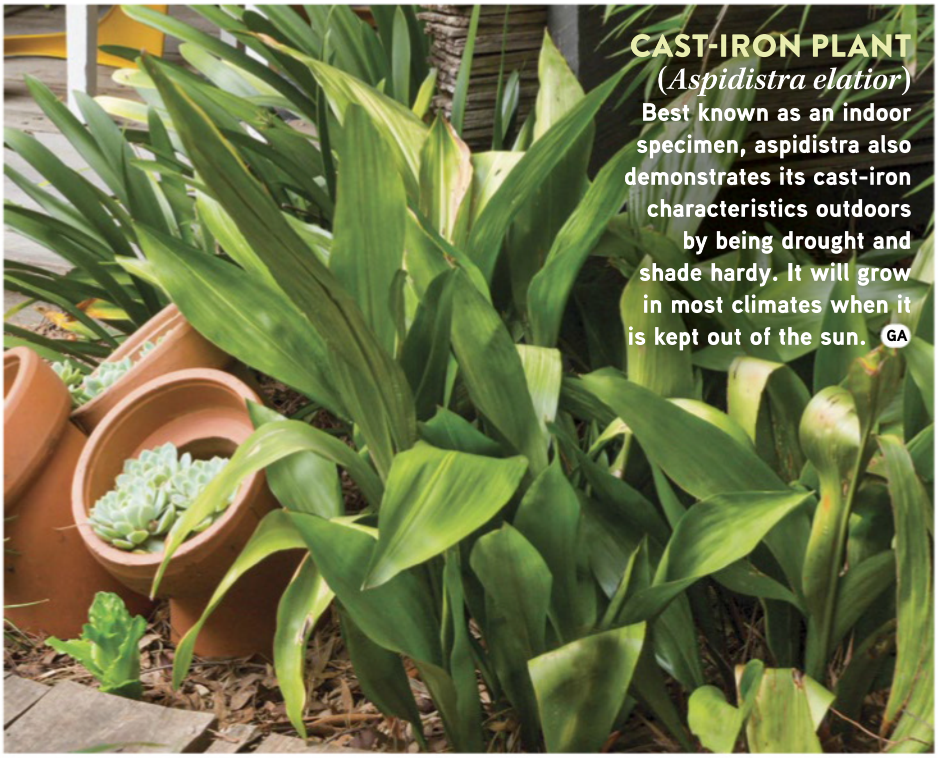
This cold-tolerant Eurasian plant is drought resistant and shade tolerant, and it has phylloclades, or flattened stems, in place of leaves. These will intrigue visitors, especially when tiny flowers appear in the centre of the 'leaves'. Red berries appear on female plants when a male plant is nearby.

## MIDYIM BERRY

### (*Austromyrtus* spp.)

A low-growing Australian native, this bush sprawls over the ground in shady situations and grows happily under tall gum trees. It has dark green leaves, coppery new shoots and white blooms, followed by sweet, edible berries.





## CAST-IRON PLANT

### (*Aspidistra elatior*)

**Best known as an indoor specimen, aspidistra also demonstrates its cast-iron characteristics outdoors by being drought and shade hardy. It will grow in most climates when it is kept out of the sun.** GA

**PHOTOS** GAP PHOTOS/HEATHER EDWARDS, KATH GADD AT MALLEE DESIGN, ISTOCK, SHUTTERSTOCK, GAP PHOTOS/BRENT WILSON

# in praise of PARSNIPS

Supermarket-standard parsnips may have ruined the reputation of these once-cherished root vegies, but **JACKIE FRENCH** reminds us of how we can enjoy them at their best

For at least 2000 years, and probably longer, parsnips were one of Europe's most cherished vegetables. Queen Elizabeth I adored parsnip pies, and tender parsnip fritters entranced her father, Henry VIII, when he wasn't choosing or bumping off another wife. Parsnips were so prized by Caesar Tiberius that he accepted loads of them from what is now part of Germany, instead of gold or any other tribute.

Even in my childhood, parsnips were the best bit of a baked dinner, caramelised as the lamb or mutton roasted. Parsnips are sweet enough to make their own glaze when they're baked with drippings, or, more healthily, rubbed with olive oil and placed on a baking tray until crisp and golden. I've even drunk that old cottage favourite, parsnip wine. It was delicious, as good as many expensive and prized white wines.

So why did we stop valuing parsnips? They lost some usefulness when sugar was cheap and could be substituted for the sweetness of parsnips in dishes, and cheap transport meant grapes could reach areas where parsnip wine had been made. But the main decline in parsnip delight is due to supermarkets wanting great big fat ones – the more corpulent the better.

A parsnip will become fat and tender by autumn if it's sown in spring – or has at least four warm months to mature – in nutrient-rich soil with regular watering. It will then get a bit fatter in late winter and spring, before going to seed – that's when too many parsnips are pulled up and sold.

Parsnips harvested just before going to seed have tough, wrinkled skin. Worse, the insides develop a tough core, making them inedible. Anyone trying to chew through a parsnip at that stage may never try again.

You need to know your parsnips to love them. A summer parsnip is usually skinny – delicious but a lot of work for little tucker. A parsnip grown in warmer parts of the subtropics may not be sweet, and drought parsnips are just plain tough. But in all climates, bar the tropics, parsnips can be extremely happy, just like parsnip eaters.

The real secret of growing the perfect parsnip is to know when to harvest it. Wait until the first frost, which turns parsnips even more sweet and tender, then have a few months of parsnip guzzling. But don't try to extend the growing season. Eat them at their best and they will be wonderful.

They are easy to grow, if the seed will germinate. Parsnip seed is only reliably viable for a year, so bought seed often won't germinate. Let one or two parsnips go to seed, staking them well as the seed heads grow tall, and save the seed for the following year. Make sure it isn't a hybrid variety or it won't come true to type, though you may get delicious parsnips.

Plant in soil that has been well fed for a previous crop, if possible. Let your parsnips grow slowly and steadily all summer, with an occasional watering. Don't feed them too much high-nitrogenous tucker or they'll grow all leaf and no bum. After a few good cold mornings, as your breath fogs around your face, haul out your parsnip roots, all plump and white and tempting.

There used to be medicinal lore about parsnips – they were supposed to make you immune to snakebite, or at least stop the snakes from biting you. Don't trust this advice. Parsnips were also supposed to be an aphrodisiac. Believe this if you like. Certainly anything delicious does lead to a greater enjoyment of life. Modern medical science also favours parsnips – but for quite different reasons. It would take several paragraphs to list their vegie virtues.

Eat parsnips roasted, with meat or by themselves. They can also be boiled or steamed, and are better with oyster sauce or butter. Add to stir-fries, or make creamy parsnip soup, which needs no cream.

There's a lovely recipe by 17th-century writer and gardener John Evelyn, for a parsnip fritter: Peel them, slice very thinly, then toss in flour. Fry gently in butter, then sprinkle with brown sugar. Dust them with cinnamon and eat hot. They are delicious.

My favourite parsnip recipe is parsnip bread. It's moist, sweet and slightly nutty, and one of the nicest breads I've eaten. I haven't had anyone refuse a second (or even fourth) slice, or guess its secret ingredient. I discovered it one day when experimenting with breads – adding carrot, pumpkin, beetroot or potato – trying to create a richer fruit bread without butter.

The carrot bread was a bit bitter, as was the beetroot, which looked like breakfast for vampires. The potato bread was quite good, but the parsnip was sublime. Try it for a treat. Parsnips – passion inducing or not – are a great way to warm up winter.

**PHOTOS** ISTOCK, GAP PHOTOS/JACQUI HURST

## PARSNIP BREAD

**4 cups bread-making flour**
**1 cup warm water**
**1 tsp brown sugar**
**1 sachet (7g) dried yeast**
**1 cup boiled, peeled parsnips, mashed with a little butter**

**1** Stir 1 tsp of the flour into the water. Add the sugar and yeast and stir to combine. Leave until it bubbles, then mix in the parsnip and remaining flour. Add more warm water if necessary.

**2** Knead for at least 20 minutes. Leave in a bowl in a warm spot, covered with a tea towel, until it doubles in size. Bash it down and let it double in size again.

**3** Bake at 225°C for about half an hour or until the top turns a dark brown. A friend tells me you can make this in a bread machine.

**4** Eat it warm, or over three days. It's excellent toasted, but it grows mildew faster than commercial breads that contain preservatives.

FROM OPPOSITE
Parsnip seedlings thriving in a garden bed; parsnips are deliciously sweet and tender when harvested at the right time, before they have a chance to become too big and tough.

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# IN THE PATCH

with **PHIL DUDMAN**

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**69** Get rid of vegetable weevil
**70** Learn how to stop banana plants from toppling over
**73** Quick tasks for the time-conscious gardener
**+** sow & plant chart

**PHOTO** ISTOCK

# resplendent rhubarb

Rhubarb is a decorative and delicious addition to the vegie patch – and now is a good time to plant it. **PHIL DUDMAN** shares his top 10 tips for a bumper harvest

## 1 sun

Full sun is best for growing rhubarb, but on hot days, it will benefit from some shade. A simple temporary frame with a shadecloth cover does the trick. In warmer areas, consider either a more permanent shade structure, or plant it in dappled light.

## 2 soil

Rhubarb thrives in deep, luxuriant soil. Add plenty of compost and well-aged cow manure before planting. It won't tolerate wet feet. Mound the soil to improve drainage or grow in raised beds if your soil is heavy. You could also grow it in large containers.

## 3 planting

It's better to plant crowns (offsets taken from established plants) than seedlings. Crowns will provide a harvest in the first or second season, but seedlings may take several years. Crowns are available now in garden centres and online. Plant with the top of the crown at the soil surface level.

## 4 spacing

Don't crowd the plants. Rhubarb will be in the ground for years, so it needs room to expand. Allow at least 1m between plants.

## 5 watering

Those big leaves need plenty of water. Keep plants moist, and give them a deep soaking once or twice a week in hot dry weather. To conserve moisture, cover soil with an organic mulch (compost or straw).

## 6 feeding

For the highest yields, feed regularly. In spring, summer and autumn, sprinkle a handful (or two for established plants) of blood and bone or pelletised poultry manure around the base, then add worm castings or compost, and water in well. Supplement with a fortnightly soaking of seaweed solution and fish emulsion. They'll lap it up!

## 7 harvesting

It's generally recommended to hold off harvesting in the first year, but who will stop you? Just don't take too much, as the plants need to build up their size and energy stores. Pick (don't cut) the thickest stalks: hold the stem firmly, then twist and pull so they come away cleanly. Never harvest more than one third of the stalks at a time to avoid weakening the plant. Remember, the leaves are poisonous – trim them with a knife and add to the compost.

## 8 flowering

From time to time, you may see a flower stem erupting from the centre of the crown. It takes energy for a plant to flower and set seed, energy that could otherwise be directed to leaf and stalk production, so remove flower stems as soon as they appear. Follow them down to the base and cut them off with a sharp knife, as close as possible to the crown.

## 9 dividing

Rhubarb loses vigour after a few years as the clump becomes crowded. Splitting it every 3–5 years reinvigorates the plants and provides you with more crowns to plant out or share with friends. In winter, dig around the clump and lift the whole lot out of the ground. Select healthy young shoots from around the outside that have 2–3 growth buds, then cut through the base and separate them from the main clump. Replant the new divisions straightaway or wrap in moist newspaper until you're ready.

## 10 overwintering

As plants slow down over winter, remove the last leaves and cover with a thick layer of straw to protect the crown and conserve soil moisture.

### top picks

- **Ever Red** Sweet crimson red stems, year-round producer
- **Mount Tamborine** Large ruby red stems, popular in Queensland
- **Red Dragon** Vibrant deep red stalks, sweet
- **Silvan Giant** Vigorous grower, good choice for colder climates
- **Sydney Crimson** Highly productive, early-market variety

### at a glance

**common name**
rhubarb

**botanic name**
*Rheum rhabarbarum*

**plant type**
perennial herb

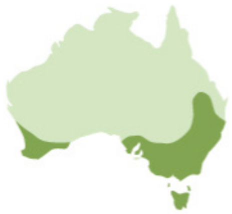
↑ 1–1.2m

↔ 1–1.2m

☀☁ full sun, semi-shade

late autumn to spring (from a division); spring (from seed)

spring to autumn



🟩 suitable

PHOTOS GAP PHOTOS/RICHARD BLOOM, SHUTTERSTOCK

# high stakes

## New fruit trees always need to be staked – or do they? **PHIL DUDMAN** challenges this common belief

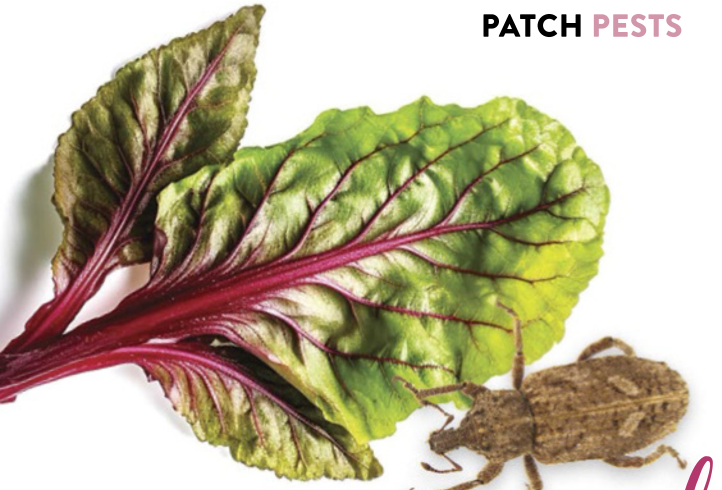
It makes sense to offer support to a newly planted fruit tree by staking it, but in most cases, it's unnecessary and may do more harm than good. Rather than make the tree stronger (as intended), staking often weakens a tree, particularly when done incorrectly. A tree that's tied too tightly to a stake will become dependent on the support. Later, when the stake is removed, the immature trunk goes floppy, making it prone to snapping. Also, tight ties can damage the bark and girdle the tree, and badly placed stakes may damage and break branches.

A young tree that's allowed to move freely in the breeze responds to the movement by expanding its anchoring root growth and broadening the girth of its trunk, making the tree more stable.

Having said all that, there are times when staking a young fruit tree is justified. If the tree will be regularly exposed to high winds, you should probably stake it, although fruit trees produce better in protected positions, so consider planting a windbreak or finding a different spot. You may also decide to stake a tree if playful kids or animals could knock it about, or if it's already in the ground toppling over and needs straightening.

Drive one or two stakes firmly into the soil beyond the root ball of the tree. To prevent damage, the ties should be strong but also wide and flexible. Wide strips of fabric, pantyhose or rubber from the inner tube of a bicycle wheel are ideal. Tie in a continuous loop around the trunk and stake, loose enough to allow the tree to move and sway. Remove the support as soon as the tree is standing firmly on its own (normally after one growing season).

**PHOTO** GAP PHOTOS/FRIEDRICH STRAUSS



# vegetable *weevil*

## Are weevils trying to wheedle their way into your vegie patch?

The cooler months are when the vegetable weevil makes its presence felt. Early in the season, it's the larvae that do the damage. These little grubs (about 12mm long) start off a creamy white, then turn green with age, with a brown head. It's all very well to describe them, but you're unlikely to notice them. During the day, they shelter at the base of plants and in the soil, then come out at night to feed, mainly on the leaves and growing tips of leafy vegetables, brassicas (the cabbage family) and Solanaceae (the tomato family). They'll even nibble on roots and underground stems, which can make a mess of your carrots, beetroots, spuds, turnips, parsnips and radishes, and it stunts their growth.

Initially, the young larvae make a few holes at the base of plants. Eventually, their appetites and bodies expand, demolishing whole leaves. When they've had their fill, they pupate in the soil, emerging later (normally in spring) as fully fledged adult weevils. These greyish-brown beetles (*above*) are about 10mm long with a faint V-shaped mark on their backs and that distinctive weevil beak-like snout. They're quite elusive too, hiding in the soil by day and feeding on leaves at night. They love eating young plants and may girdle seedlings, much like cutworms do.

If you suspect your plants are under attack, pull up a carrot, beetroot or other root vegie that's suffering. The roots will bear a few tunnels and rough grooves on their outer walls. You'll see similar chewing damage on the lower stems and crowns of leafy vegetables. Visit the crops with a torch at night, look under the leaves and collect any larvae you see. Even the adults are easy to catch. You could also spray the pests with horticultural soap or pyrethrum. These sprays need to make direct contact with the pest to be effective, so apply at night when they're active.

Crop rotation also plays an important role. Follow up damaged crops with plants that aren't susceptible to vegetable weevil: peas, cucumber, zucchini and pumpkin.

**TEXT** PHIL DUDMAN **PHOTO** KEN WALKER

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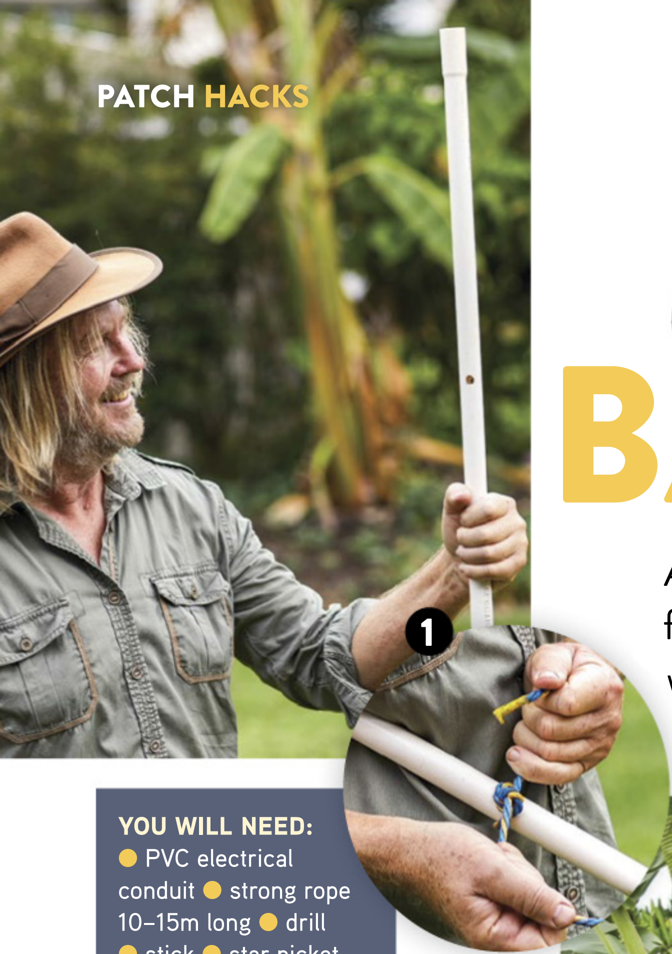
# unbending BANANAS

A leaning banana plant laden with ripening fruit has the potential to fall over in strong wind or rain. **PHIL DUDMAN** shows how to prop one up and save your harvest

PHOTOS ANNA HUTCHCROFT

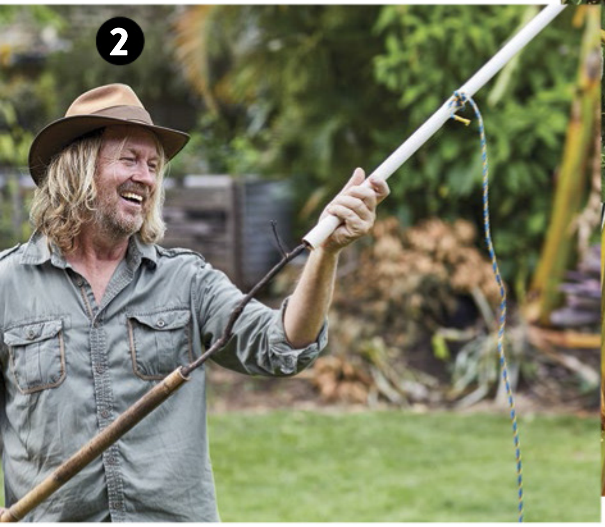


1

**YOU WILL NEED:**
● PVC electrical conduit ● strong rope 10–15m long ● drill ● stick ● star picket ● star picket post driver

## STEP-BY-STEP

**1 CUT** the PVC conduit to a length of about 1m. At the central point, drill a hole through both sides of the pipe, making sure the holes are wide enough for the rope to fit through. Thread the rope through the holes and tie it securely. This pipe is the brace. It will end up holding the weight of the plant.
**2 GRAB** a long hollow extender pole (use more PVC conduit or a length of bamboo). Push a stick into both the brace and the extender pole to attach the two temporarily.



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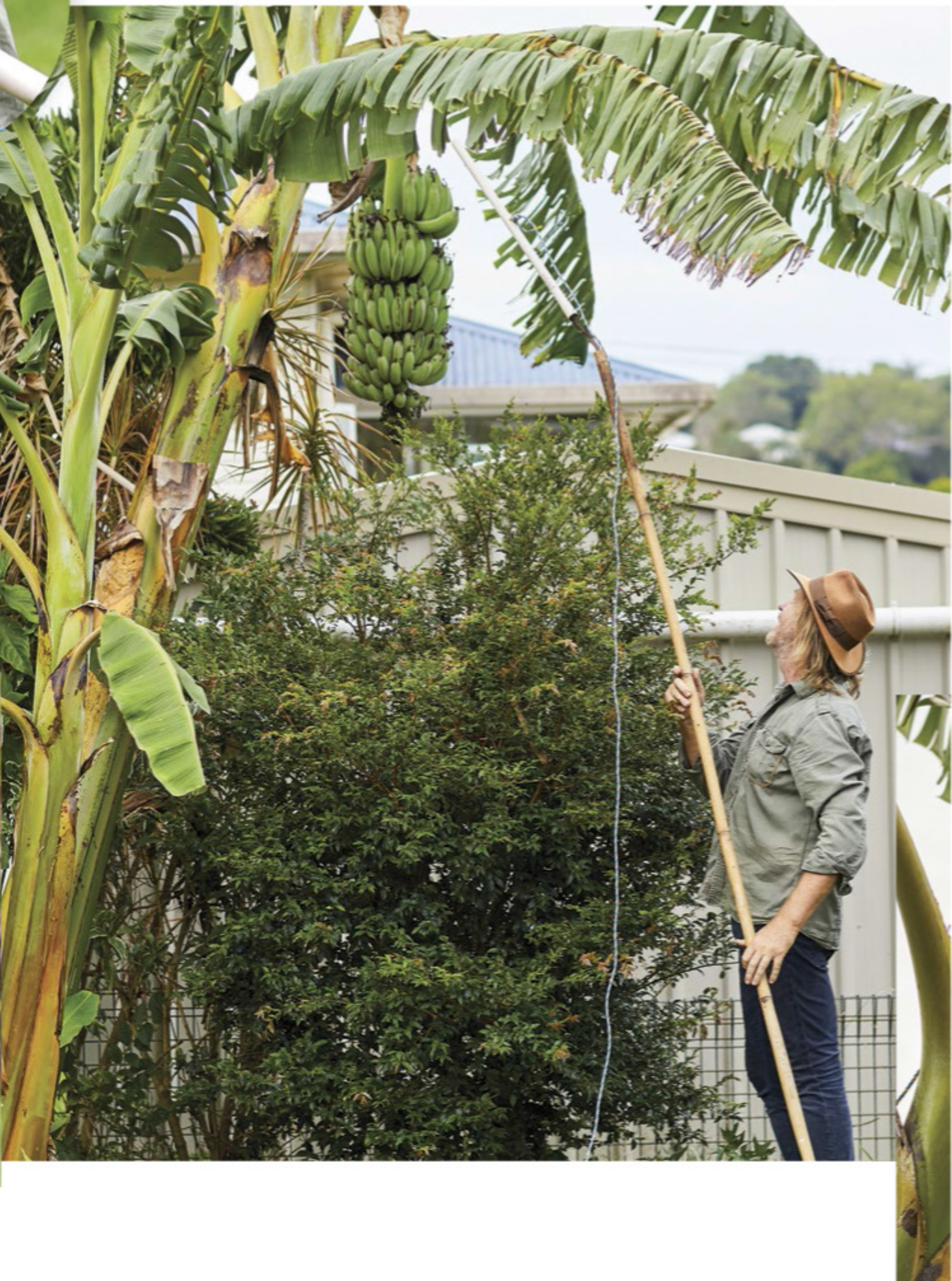

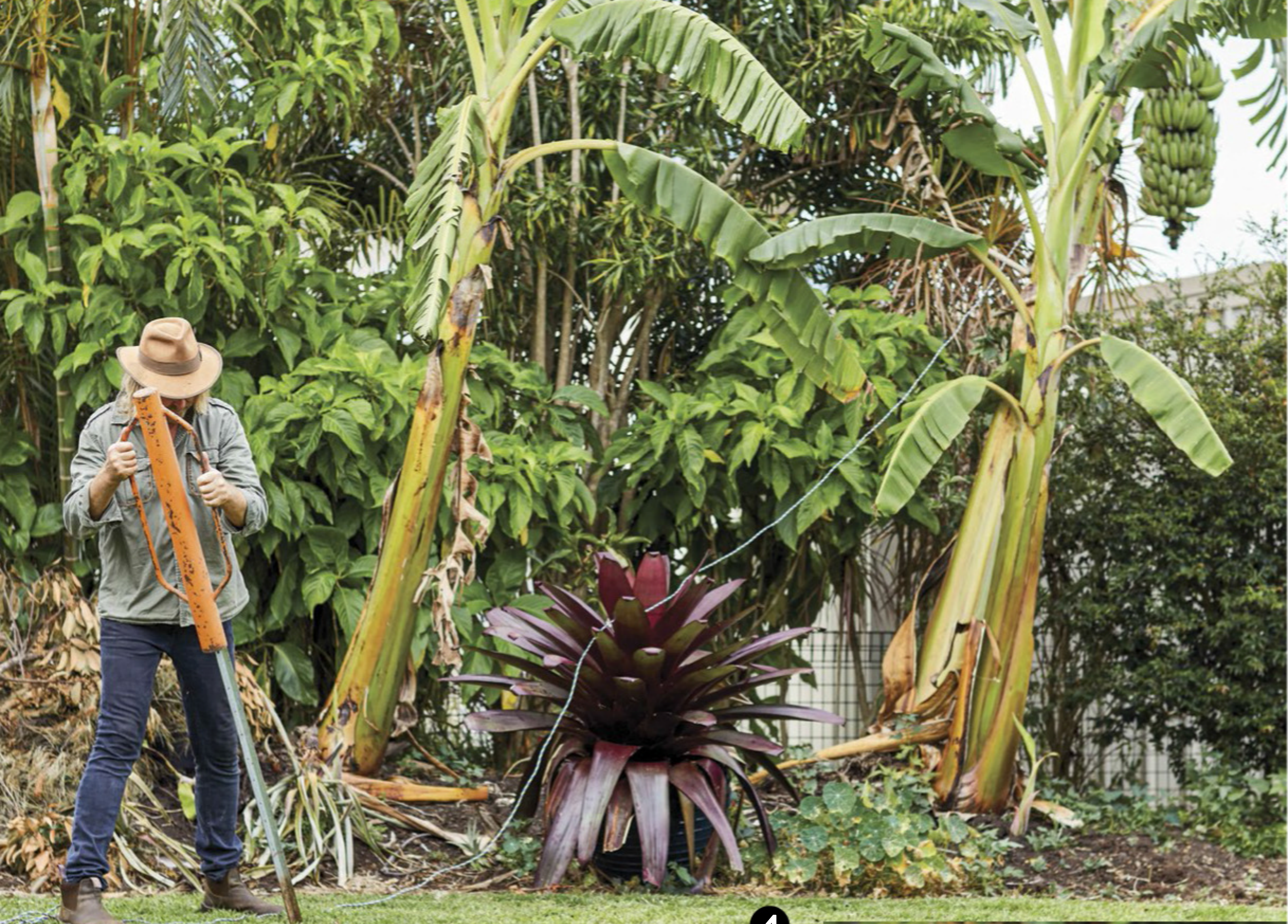

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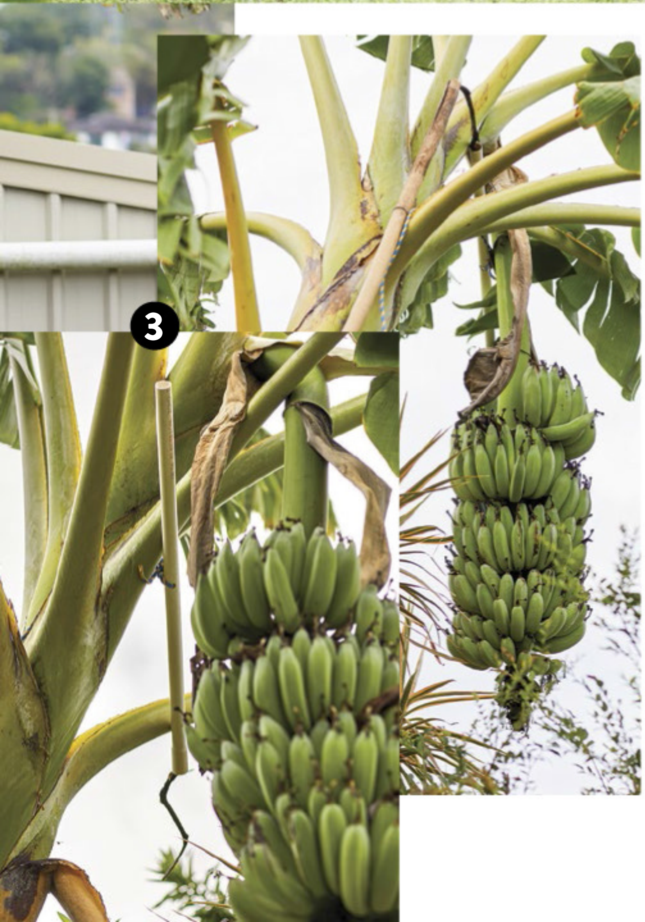
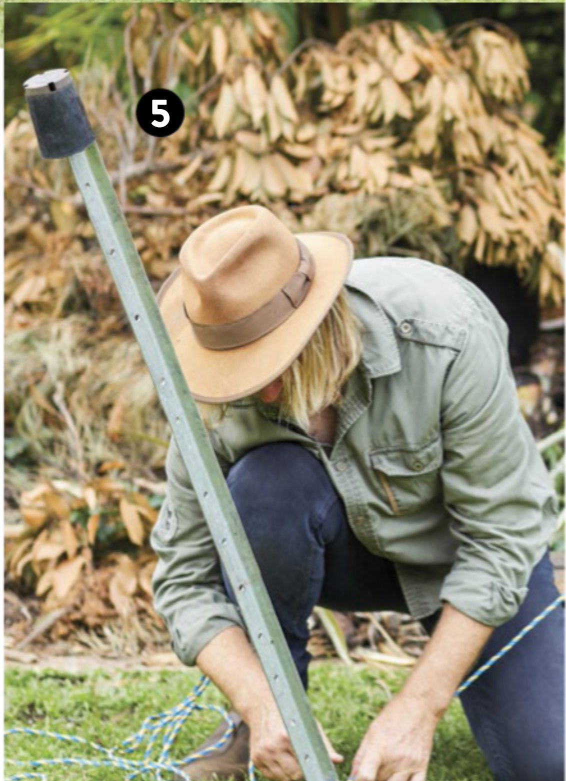


3

**3 THREAD** the brace through the top of the plant, then withdraw the extender pole (you might need to shake the brace free). Pull the rope and adjust the positioning of the brace until it sits horizontally and is wedged within the leaves.

**4 DRIVE** a star picket firmly into the ground, angling it in the opposite direction to the lean of the tree. A star picket post driver is the ideal tool to help you pound the picket into the ground, but you can also use a sledgehammer.

**5 LOOP** the rope through the lowest hole in the star picket, pull tightly and tie it securely. Cover the top of the star picket with a small plastic pot or something similar to avoid injury.



5

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... to THIS!

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Whether you have 15 minutes or an hour to spare, you can always put your time to good use in the productive garden. Here are a few suggestions...

**15 MINS**

## HARVEST CITRUS

With the citrus season in full swing, backyard trees are dripping with ripened mandarins, lemons, limes, tangelos, grapefruits and navel oranges ready for picking (Valencia oranges won't be ready until at least September). Sample a few first to see if the fruit are to your liking. If not, come back when they're a little bit sweeter, then pick a few to eat every day to get your daily dose of vitamin C, and be sure to share any excess with friends. Snip the stems rather than pulling the fruit off, to avoid damaging the tree.

**30 MINS**

## TREAT PEACHES FOR LEAF CURL

Have your peach and nectarine trees ever had leaf curl? This fungal disease causes distorted leaves, and winter is the season to manage it. Spray the tree with a solution of lime sulfur or copper hydroxide (you can alternate them each year), covering all stem, branch and trunk surfaces. Before spraying, spread newspaper under the tree to protect friendly soil-borne fungi. Apply a follow-up spray in late winter, just before leaf and flower buds swell. Choose a still, sunny day and wear gloves, goggles and a protective mask.

**60 MINS**

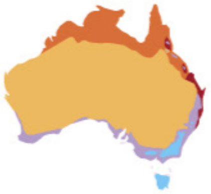
## PLANT DECIDUOUS FRUIT TREES

It's time to plant apples, pears, plums, apricots, figs, mulberries, cherries, pomegranates and other deciduous fruit. They're available bare-rooted now, so they're cheaper and easier to handle. Check the roots when you get home, trim off any that are soft or diseased, and soak the root ball in water while you prepare the planting hole. Make a mound of soil at the base of the hole, spread the roots over it and backfill, with the graft union 10cm above the soil surface. Water well. Keep just moist over winter (water more in spring).

TEXT PHIL DUDMAN PHOTOS ISTOCK

## SOW & PLANT NOW

| | tropical | subtropical | arid/semi-arid | warm temperate | cold temperate |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| artichoke (globe) | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| asian greens | ● | ● | ● | | |
| asparagus crowns | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| beans (french, climbing) | ● | ● | | | |
| beetroot | ● | ● | | | |
| broad beans | | | | ● | ● |
| broccoli | ● | ● | ● | ● | |
| cabbage | ● | ● | ● | ● | |
| carrot | ● | ● | | | |
| celery | ● | ● | | ● | |
| chives | ● | ● | ● | ● | |
| coriander | ● | ● | | ● | ● |
| endive | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| english spinach | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| kale | | ● | ● | ● | |
| kohlrabi | ● | ● | ● | ● | |
| lettuce | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| mint | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| onion | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| parsley | ● | ● | ● | | |
| peas | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| potato | ● | ● | | ● | |
| radish | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| rocket | ● | ● | | | |
| silverbeet | ● | ● | | | |
| snow peas | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| spring onion | ● | ● | | ● | |
| strawberry | | | | ● | |
| swede | ● | ● | ● | ● | |
| tomato | ● | ● | | | |
| turnip | ● | ● | ● | ● | |



### KEY

| | |
|---|---|
| tropical | ● |
| subtropical | ● |
| arid/semi-arid | ● |
| warm temperate | ● |
| cold temperate | ● |

# TV

*Gardening Australia* is on ABC TV every Friday at 7.30pm, repeated on Sunday at 1.30pm and on ABC iview.

## June 16

**Costa Georgiadis** gives a landscaping lesson, **Josh Byrne** looks at the relationships between microbes and nutrients, **Jane Edmanson** explores an established edible forest, **Tammy Huynh** visits an orchid emporium, **Hannah Moloney** installs a windbreak hedge, and we meet a gardener growing a fulfilling career in Canberra.

## June 23

**Millie Ross** meets a family supporting the next generation of farmers, **Hannah Moloney** explores a collaboratively built dream garden, **Jerry Coleby-Williams** salvages plants from a garden overhaul, **Clarence Slockee** covers planting basics, **Sophie Thomson** (*pictured*) fills her garden with night-time fragrance, and we meet a gardener with a fancy for fuchsias.

## June 30

**Jane Edmanson** visits a centenarian still active in the garden, **Costa Georgiadis** showcases strappy-leafed plants, **Jerry Coleby-Williams** rejuvenates a raised bed, **Tammy Huynh** cares for African violets, **Josh Byrne** shows how to grow eucalyptus in a pot, **Sophie Thomson** designs perennial pairings, and we meet a garden guru working in arid Alice Springs.

The *Gardening Australia* TV show is taking a break during July, returning on August 18 to help you get ready for spring! In the meantime, join us on Facebook and Instagram, check out our YouTube channel, and catch your favourite segments on **abc.net.au/gardening**. While you're there, subscribe to our free digital newsletter!

# radio

**Tune into your local ABC radio for gardening advice from the experts. See times below. For more details about coverage in your area, phone 139 994 or visit reception.abc.net.au.**

## NSW

**ABC Radio Sydney**
Saturday 9am
**ABC Radio Central Coast**
Saturday 9am
**ABC Central West**
Saturday 8.30am
**ABC Illawarra**
Saturday 8.30am
**ABC Mid North Coast; ABC Coffs Coast**
Saturday 9.30am, Thursday 9.30am
**ABC Newcastle**
Saturday 8.30am
**ABC New England North West**
Saturday 8.30am, Thursday 9.30am
**ABC North Coast**
Saturday 8.30am
**ABC Riverina**
Saturday 8.30am, Tuesday 9.35am
**ABC South East**
Wednesday 10am, Saturday 9am
**ABC Western Plains**
Thursday 9.35am fortnightly, Saturday 8.30am

## NT

**ABC Darwin & ABC Katherine**
Saturday 9am
**ABC Alice Springs; ABC Tennant Creek**
Saturday 8.30am

## QLD

**ABC Radio Brisbane**
Saturday 6am
**ABC Gold Coast**
Saturday 9am
**ABC Sunshine Coast**
Wednesday 9am, Saturday 8.30am
**ABC Southern Queensland**
Saturday 9am
**ABC North Queensland**
Friday 10am
**ABC Tropical North; ABC Capricornia; ABC Wide Bay; ABC North West Qld; ABC Western Qld**
Friday 10am
**ABC Far North**
Friday 10am, Saturday 7.30am

## ACT

**ABC Radio Canberra**
Saturday 8.30am

## SA

**ABC Radio Adelaide; ABC North & West; ABC Eyre Peninsula; ABC South East SA**
Saturday 8.30am
**ABC Riverland**
Saturday 7am
**ABC Broken Hill**
Saturday 9am
**Statewide; ABC Radio Adelaide; ABC North & West; ABC Eyre Peninsula; ABC South East; ABC Riverland; ABC Broken Hill**
Sunday 11am

## TAS

**ABC Radio Hobart; ABC Northern Tasmania**
Saturday 9am

## VIC

**ABC Radio Melbourne**
Saturday 9.10am
**ABC Victoria**
Monday 9.40am, Saturday 9.10am
**ABC Southwest Victoria**
Thursday 7.20am fortnightly

## WA

**ABC Radio Perth; ABC Great Southern; ABC South West; ABC Goldfields Esperance; ABC Kimberley; ABC Pilbara; ABC Midwest and Wheatbelt**
Tuesday 2.15pm, Saturday 9.05am

listen

Download the *ABC listen* app and listen to live radio streams of gardening programs across Australia.

PHOTO KELLY GARDNER

THIS INFORMATION IS CORRECT AT THE TIME OF PRINTING BUT IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

**YOUR PLANNER**

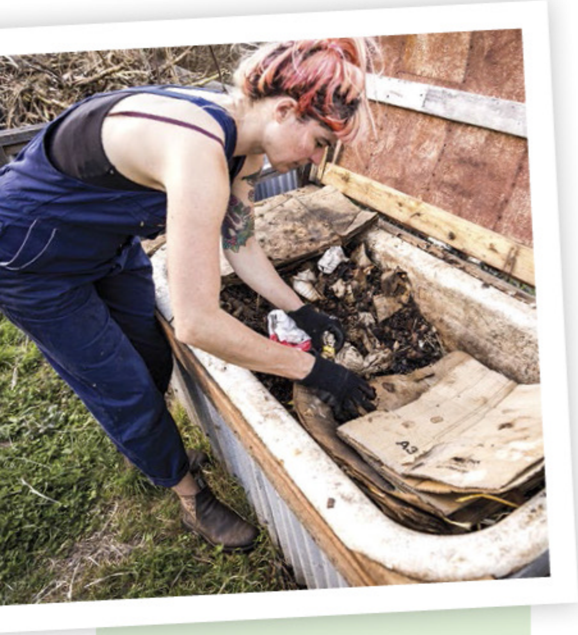
JULY

# a month in the GARDEN

## More than 50 seasonal jobs to do

words by **JUDY HORTON**

**PHOTO** GAP PHOTOS/FHF GREENMEDIA



## It's time to...

- **Reduce** the amount of food scraps you give to compost worms (*above*), as they eat less when the weather's cool
- **Transplant** deciduous shrubs while they are in the depths of their winter dormancy
- **Select** healthy pencil-thick pieces of rose prunings to propagate new roses for other parts of the garden (*for more on rose pruning, see page 48*)
- **Lightly trim** to shape the outer foliage of conifers, but avoid cutting back into bare branches as they won't re-shoot
- **Move** potted winter-blooming bulbs to an out-of-the-way spot after they've finished flowering
- **Plant** bulbs of summer-blooming varieties such as hippeastrum, jockey's cap lily (*Tigridia* spp.), belladonna and galtonia
- **Prune** long shoots from deciduous ornamental vines such as campsis, summer-blooming clematis, chocolate vine and Virginia creeper
- **Improve** the soil by blending in organic matter and compost while the weather is cool and it's easier to do hard physical work
- **Cut off** old woody hydrangea stems at ground level
- **Plant** some winter-flowering aloes – their blooms will attract nectar-feeding birds to the garden

TOP JOB

# grow winter herbs

Don't forget about your herb garden in winter. Many herbs grow well through the winter months and some actually prefer cooler conditions. Coriander (*above right*) is a good example. It tends to 'bolt' to seed in summer, and the leaves become unpalatable, but it flourishes through autumn, winter and spring.

Herbs require less frequent watering in winter but it's important not to let them dry out. It's best to water in the morning and try to keep water off the leaves. Grow winter herbs in pots near the back door in a sunny or lightly shaded position – this makes it easier to check on their condition and harvest them as required.

Other winter-growing herbs include:

- **Parsley** Best started in autumn, parsley grows right through the cool weather. Plus, it's attractive enough to be used as an ornamental border.
- **Sage** Keep sage's slightly furry leaves dry when watering. It can also be helpful to mulch around the plant with terracotta chips or pebbles, as this will prevent water splashing up into its centre.
- **Rosemary** Renowned for adding flavour to winter lamb roasts, rosemary grows easily in a sunny, well-drained spot. There are even groundcover versions that will trail down the sides of a big pot or retaining wall.

# GROW MUSHROOMS INDOORS

- **Oregano and thyme** (*above left*) These low growers will be ready for picking at almost any time of the year. All they need is sun, good drainage and the occasional liquid fertiliser.
- **Bay** (*below*) Bay is best confined to a pot where its growth can be controlled. Some find that the flavour is enhanced by first drying the leaves. Feed your bay plant once or twice a year with slow-release fertiliser pellets, and watch out for scale insects. Squash these by hand as soon as they appear.

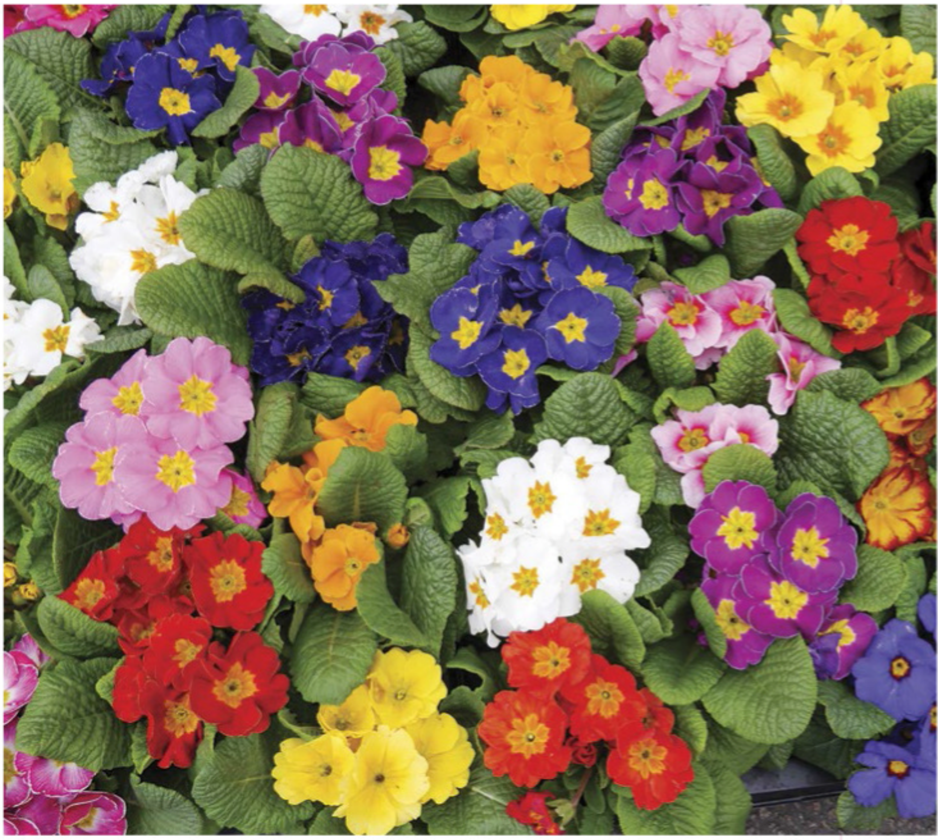
**Winter is a good season to grow mushrooms indoors** because it's easy to keep them within their preferred temperature range of 15–24˚C. You can also avoid pests such as slugs, gnats and mice. A ready-to-go mushroom kit will get you started. Follow the instructions for spreading the mushroom casing over the peat moss before moving the kit to a spot out of direct sunlight. Keep the mix moist by spraying as directed with clean water from a hand sprayer. In 3–5 weeks, your mushrooms will be ready to start harvesting. Once the mushrooms have finished (usually after about three months), throw the contents of the kit into your compost, or spread them over a garden bed.

PHOTOS NATALIE MENDHAM, ISTOCK, SHUTTERSTOCK

looking good

# Polyanthus

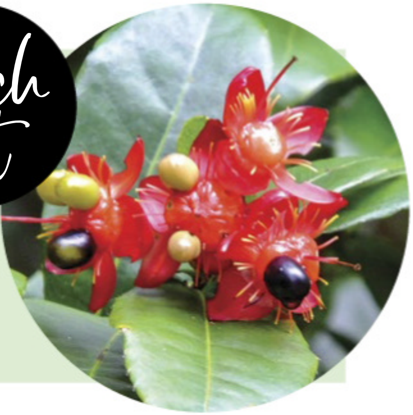
These cheery winter bloomers are amazingly versatile and can be grown indoors or out. Indoors, place them near, but not right next to, a sunny window. Outside, they prefer semi-shade and cool, moist but well-drained soil. In areas with cool summers and lots of water, they can continue flowering right through the warm months. Why not grab yourself a poly pot – they're good value!



watch out

## WOODY WEEDS

**Keep your eyes open for seedlings of woody weeds such as privet, lantana, camphor laurel, holly, African olive and Mickey Mouse plant (*Ochna serrulata*, *right*) establishing themselves in garden beds. They're much easier to spot in winter when the growth of garden plants is slower and lower.**



## Do it now

- **Install** a chimenea (*above*) or fire pit that will create a warm outdoor entertaining area
- **Plant** lily-of-the-valley pips in areas where you get cool summers and cold winters (Note: they are highly toxic)
- **Establish** a mini hedge of dwarf nandinas or *Acmena* 'Allyn Magic' that will give you good leaf colour every winter
- **Pull out** small bindii plants before they have time to develop their prickly seeds
- **Buy** winter-perfumed plants such as daphne, winter honeysuckle (*Lonicera fragrantissima*) and luculia while they are on show in garden centres
- **Set up** screens around newly planted shrubs and trees to protect them from strong winds
- **Leave** jonquils in place after flowering, and water fortnightly with liquid fertiliser until the leaves die down
- **Buy** winter-flowering native plants such as long-leaf wax flower (*Philotheca myoporoides*), emu tree (*Hakea francisiana*) and heath (*Epacris* spp.) for spring planting
- **Finish** pruning roses in warm areas, but wait a bit longer to prune them in cold climates
- **Tidy up** all above-ground dead matter left by herbaceous perennials that have died down

**TOP JOB**

# plant NATIVE GROUNDCOVERS

There are so many exciting varieties of Australian native plants, and many have been developed to be long flowering and pest and disease resistant. There's a huge range of excellent low growers that will allow you to enjoy the blooms at ground level. Examples include the dwarf sticky wattle *Acacia howittii* 'Green Wave', which can spread more than a metre; *Banksia* 'Birthday Candles' (*right*), with its bird-attracting autumn and winter blooms; and many grevillea varieties such as the old favourite *Grevillea* 'Poorinda Royal Mantle', which can spread to five metres or more. These are great for draping down and covering a steep bank that would otherwise be hard to maintain.

There are new native cultivars coming out all the time, and they can be planted at this time of year in tropical and subtropical areas.

# visit orchid shows

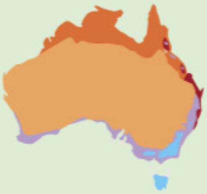
The orchid parade continues through winter and well into spring, with a huge range of varieties currently on display and for sale. Take advantage of the many orchid shows that are held at this time of year, and see what's new, enjoy old favourites and pick the brains of the many experts who will be on hand. Most have grown their own stock so are well equipped to provide advice.

LOOKING FOR THE VEGIE SOW & PLANT CHART? Turn to page 73

## SOW & PLANT NOW

*Before planting, check individual varieties for weed potential in your local area.*

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| alyssum | ● | ● | | | |
| aquilegia (columbine) | | ● | | ● | |
| calendula | ● | ● | | ● | |
| candytuft | ● | ● | ● | ● | |
| carnation | | ● | ● | ● | |
| cineraria | ● | ● | | ● | |
| coleus | ● | ● | | | |
| dianthus | | ● | ● | ● | |
| hollyhock | ● | ● | | ● | |
| impatiens | ● | ● | | | |
| linaria | ● | ● | | ● | |
| lobelia | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| marigold | ● | ● | | ● | |
| nemesia | ● | ● | | ● | |
| pansy | ● | ● | ● | ● | |
| polyanthus | | ● | | ● | ● |
| poppy | | ● | | ● | |
| primula | | ● | | ● | ● |
| rosy sunray | | | ● | ● | ● |
| salvia | ● | ● | | | |
| statice | ● | ● | | | |
| stock | ● | ● | ● | ● | |
| sunflower | ● | ● | | | |
| swan river daisy | | ● | ● | ● | |
| sweet william | | ● | ● | ● | |
| viola | ● | ● | ● | ● | |
| wallflower | | ● | | ● | |
| zinnia | ● | ● | | | |



### KEY

| | |
|---|---|
| tropical | ● |
| subtropical | ● |
| arid/semi-arid | ● |
| warm temperate | ● |
| cold temperate | ● |

top tip

## ADD WINTER GOLD

Use golden flowers or foliage to add warm touches to your winter garden. Melaleucas, golden conifers, yellow flax (*Reinwardtia indica, left*), *Banksia ericifolia* and yellow *Grevillea juniperina* (*below left*) are just some of the shrubs you can choose from. For pots or short-term indoor colour, try *Narcissus* 'Soleil d'Or' (*below*) or calendulas. The rich colours of these plants will warm you up on chilly winter days.

**PHOTOS** ISTOCK, CHLOE FOSTER, SHUTTERSTOCK

## Edibles

- **Cut back** berry canes (*above*) that haven't been pruned since they fruited
- **Prune** grapes while they are dormant, before they make new growth that will 'bleed' and lose sap when cut
- **Sprinkle** sulfate of potash alongside rows of broad beans and water in well
- **Install** strong stakes to prop up the fruit-laden branches of citrus trees, and use soft ties to attach the branches to the stakes
- **Continue** to pick Brussels sprouts, working your way up the stem as they mature without letting the sprouts get too big
- **Divide** and lift established clumps of chives, moving some to fresh beds in a new location
- **Chip out** weeds in the vegie patch, but take care not to hoe too near any developing crops
- **Remove** dead leaves from growing cabbages and discourage the spread of root-borne disease by pulling out their roots after harvest
- **Check** citrus branches for gall wasp damage, and cut off, bag and bin any branch sections with hole-free lumps – then spray new growth with oil to prevent re-infection
- **Soak** roots of bare-rooted fruit trees in a seaweed solution for half an hour before planting

**TOP JOB**

## celebrate World Chocolate Day

July 7 is said to be the day that, in 1550, chocolate was first introduced to Europe, setting this delicacy on the road to becoming possibly the world's favourite confectionery. You might like to mark this date by planting something chocolate-related in your garden.

Lucky gardeners in the tropics can successfully grow the source of chocolate, the cacao tree (*Theobroma cacao*, *far right*), which is native to the Amazon region. Cacao trees flourish in warm, moist, shaded rainforest conditions, where the trunks of mature trees will sprout pretty starry-white blooms followed by large pods. Within the ripe pods are the beans that are the source of that magical ingredient, cocoa. Water cacao trees in dry periods, and keep the root area well mulched with a layer of organic matter that will keep the roots moist and encourage the many tiny insects that pollinate its blooms.

If you can't grow cacao in your climate, think about acknowledging this special day by planting something with a chocolate connection. One suggestion is the low-growing native chocolate lily (*Arthropodium strictum*, *above*), with its chocolate-scented purple-blue flowers and edible (but not chocolate-flavoured) tubers. Or there's the chocolate cosmos (*Cosmos atrosanguineus*, *above right*), with its

## MAKE A MANURE HOTBED

striking red-brown chocolate-scented daisy flowers through summer and autumn. Plant this into fertile, well-drained soil in a sunny position in spring. It may perform as a short-lived perennial in warmer climates but can be treated as an annual where it's cooler.

If you have access to plenty of manure, you might like to try this old-fashioned gardening technique. Set up a frame on the ground and shovel in fresh horse manure. Once you've built up a pile with a rounded top, spread a layer of three parts soil mixed with two parts mushroom compost and one part sand over the top. Cover with clear plastic or a sheet of glass and leave the heap to heat up and then eventually cool down. In a month or so it should be cool enough to be used as a seedbed for carrots, radishes, beetroot and silverbeet. After that's finished, the timing should be perfect to follow with some tomatoes or cucurbits. They'll appreciate the goodness of the manure base.

**PHOTOS** ISTOCK, GAP PHOTOS/MARK WINWOOD

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## In the tropics

- **Keep** bananas well-watered through dry periods (*above*)
- **Fertilise** passionfruit plants every six weeks with a citrus food that includes trace elements
- **Prune** acalyphas, taking cuttings from plants with desirable leaf patterns
- **Plant** heliconias as understorey plants that will add colour to lightly shaded sections of your garden
- **Sow** beetroot, silverbeet and carrot seeds direct into well-prepared and compost-enriched garden beds
- **Collect** all fallen hibiscus flowers if there has been any sign of hibiscus flower beetle, then bag and bin them
- **Hill** the soil around bean stems to encourage the plants to grow more roots and stand up to bean fly attack
- **Apply** trace element mix (follow packet directions) around the root area of avocados to increase the chances of successful pollination
- **Lightly prune** custard apples
- **Plant** more cherry tomatoes that will quickly come into fruit (*below*)

**TOP JOB**

# reduce lawn areas

Winter's a good time to think about overall garden planning. One way to make your garden easier to care for is to replace lawn in any areas where it isn't doing well. Install stepping stones (*below*) or paths in worn sections that are regularly walked over. Mulch with organic matter or pebbles in shaded sections where the grass struggles. Or, better still, create a no-mow garden by digging out the grass and replacing it with a mixed bed of native or exotic perennials or ornamental grasses. Close planting will discourage weeds.

## DEAL WITH FROST

When a sudden frost is predicted, hopefully you'll have time to throw some light cloth over plants that may be frost-affected. Bird netting or an old sheet or towel draped across some supportive stakes can provide protection. If it's too late for these measures, it can help to mist-spray susceptible plants with water in the early morning until the sun rises. Air movement can also prevent frost damage. Try setting up a battery-operated fan next to precious specimens.

If plants have been frost burnt, leave the damaged foliage in place until the danger of frost has passed before trimming it off. The burnt leaves will act as a barrier against further damage.

# *plant a* native FOR NATIONAL TREE DAY

National Tree Day, celebrated on the last Sunday of July, gives everyone a great opportunity to take part in a school or community planting event, or to simply plant a tree in their own backyard.

Do some research beforehand to make sure that the tree you choose is suited to your climate and available space. *Brachychiton* 'Griffith Pink', *Acacia* 'Scarlet Blaze' and mallee eucalypts are good options for smaller gardens. If you have more space, think about planting a native frangipani (*Hymenosporum flavum*), a weeping bottlebrush (*Melaleuca viminalis*) or the stunning Queensland tree waratah (*Alloxylon flammeum*). In cooler climates, you could plant a lemon-scented tea-tree (*Leptospermum petersonii*), or, where its warmer, a lemon myrtle (*Backhousia citriodora, above*) – both will supply fragrant leaves that can be steeped to make a refreshing drink.

PHOTOS ISTOCK

Get the good stuff for your garden

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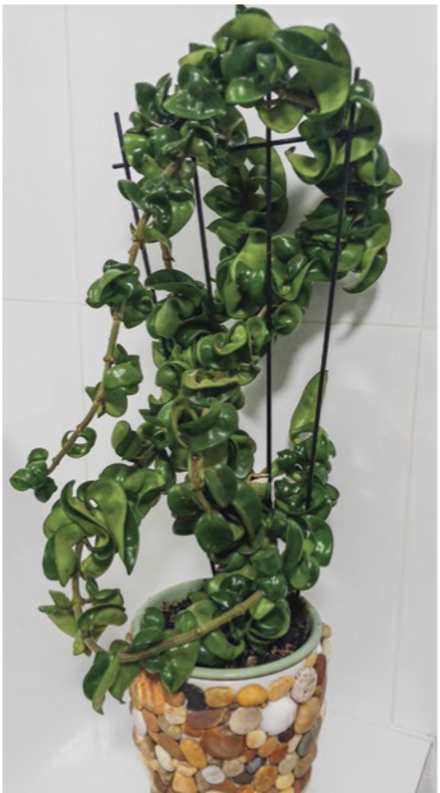
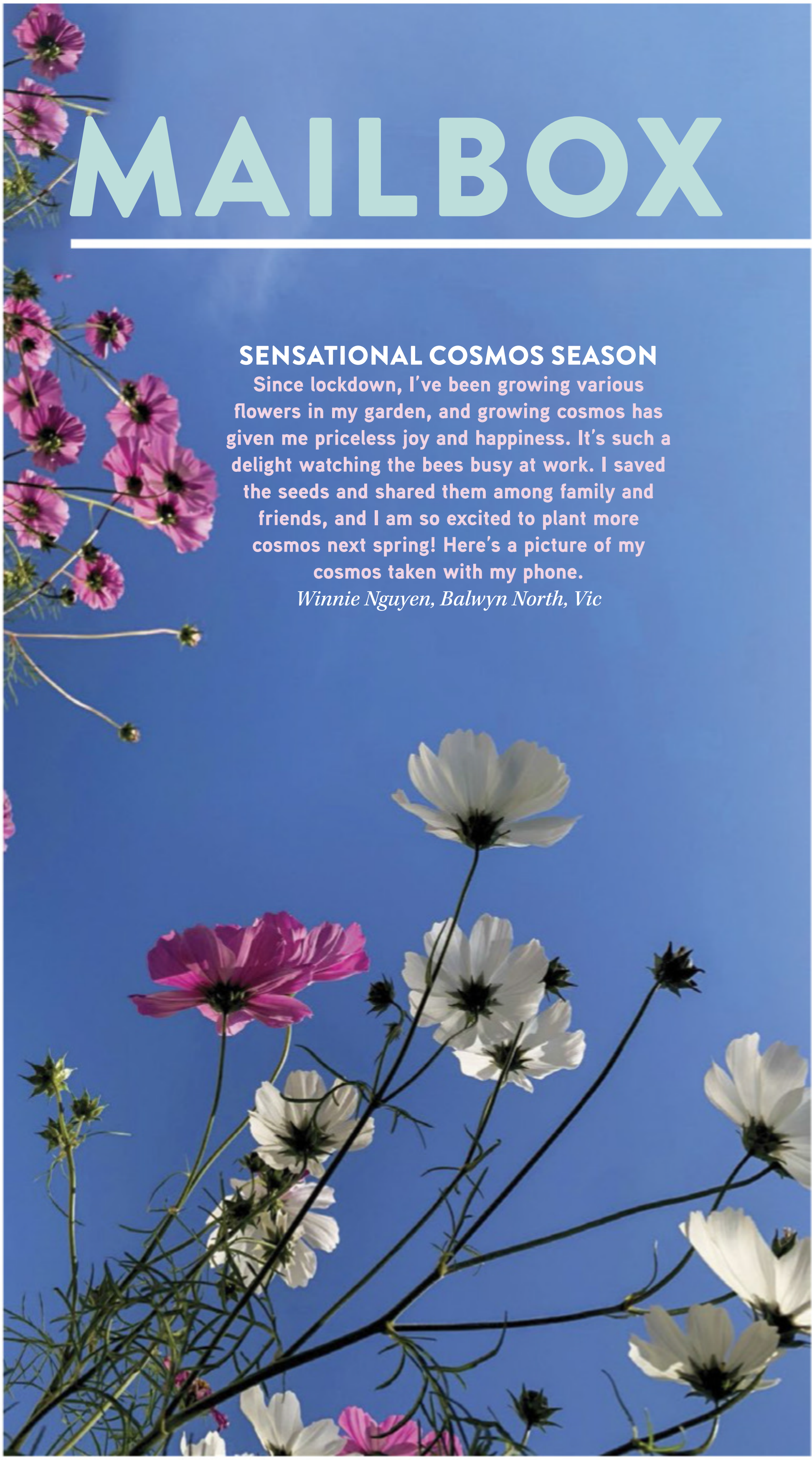
# MAILBOX

**Q** I've had my hoya for a number of years. I have never re-potted it, as I understand they don't mind being cramped in a pot. However, it has never flowered. I've moved it around a bit looking for the right spot. What do I need to do to encourage flowers?

*Kerry O'Leary, Dandenong Ranges, Vic*

**AB BISHOP SAYS** You're quite right that a cramped hoya is a happy hoya! Apart from not flowering, your plant looks very healthy. One of the reasons hoyas can fail to flower is if they're grown in a pot that's too large. Another reason is if they're getting too much water and/or nutrients. Hoyas prefer to dry out between watering and only need liquid fertilising every 2–3 months. Moving them around can also be problematic, as plants take time to adjust to different light levels. I think this, and the fact that yours doesn't seem to be getting enough light, is the issue. Flowering house plants need bright, indirect light in order to flower well. I'd consider moving it somewhere brighter and leaving it there!





## SENSATIONAL COSMOS SEASON

Since lockdown, I've been growing various flowers in my garden, and growing cosmos has given me priceless joy and happiness. It's such a delight watching the bees busy at work. I saved the seeds and shared them among family and friends, and I am so excited to plant more cosmos next spring! Here's a picture of my cosmos taken with my phone.

*Winnie Nguyen, Balwyn North, Vic*

## Q

**My worm farm has been invaded by slaters. Is there anything I can do to clean them out before I put the castings onto my garden or into my pot plants?**

*Sheryl Harper,*
*Oakford, WA*

### AB BISHOP SAYS

There's no need to remove slaters from a worm farm. You wouldn't succeed anyway, and most are harmless within the worm farm. Slaters can even benefit this environment, as their tunneling aerates the bedding, and they assist in the decomposition of organic matter. This leads to a more efficient breakdown of waste and a faster production of nutrient-rich castings. However, I understand that you wouldn't want to give slaters a free ride around the garden! While a smaller number of slaters is acceptable, if your worm farm contains an excessive population, it could indicate a problem. Perhaps it's too moist or you're feeding your worms too much. Slaters are crustaceans and, just like other water-based crustaceans, they have gills. They live in damp environments, as their gills need to be covered with a layer of water to work. To determine if your worm farm is too wet, take a handful of bedding and squeeze. If moisture drips from your hand, it's too wet. If this is the case, avoid adding wet ingredients such as fruit flesh, and gently mix in some coir peat or shredded newspaper. If you're feeding the worms too much, the excess food will start to smell. Cut back on the amount of scraps you give them.

## write and win!

Share your thoughts, ask a question, and show us your best shots. The pick of the crop each month wins a six-month subscription to ABC *Gardening Australia* magazine (current subscriptions will be extended). Note that we can only respond to letters selected for the page.

yoursay@gardeningaustralia.com.au (letters)
experts@gardeningaustralia.com.au (questions)

Your Say, Gardening Australia, nextmedia,
Locked Bag 5555, St Leonards NSW 1590

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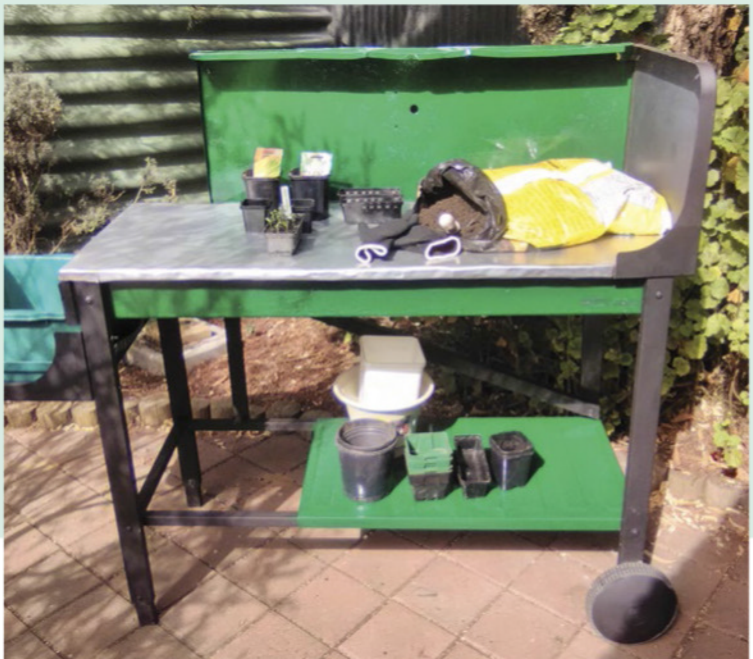
**Winnie Nguyen from Balwyn North, Vic, has won a six-month subscription to ABC *Gardening Australia* magazine for sending us this gorgeous photo of her cosmos (*left*).**

GARDENING
AUSTRALIA
Orchids
a year-round obsession
WINTER AROUND THE COUNTRY



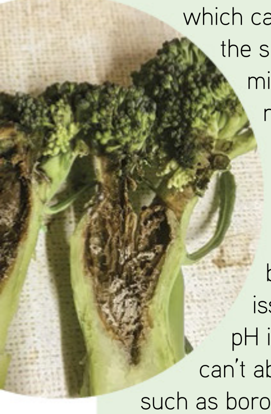
### POTTERING ABOUT

I wanted to share a photo of my newly completed potting bench – a long-time job on my to-do list since retiring. My partner, Paul, and I started this project after seeing Millie Ross do this several years ago. Paul was sceptical at first but I was adamant we could do it. The old barbecue had been sitting in the shed for several years. The only new piece was the aluminium for the top, which I picked up as a scrap piece for $20. The rest is all from the original barbecue. This rebuild took a good year to complete. I am a long-time reader, and your magazine and TV show inspire me every month and week. My bench is testament to the fact that you are never too old to do new things.

*Robyn Ticehurst, Kanmantoo, SA*

**Q** We've just harvested our broccoli. When preparing it for cooking, we noticed that the stems were partly hollow and contained a brownish ooze. I can't find any insects, although there were some slugs present on the head. What is causing this and how can we combat it?
*Ted Miller, Coolah, NSW*

### AB BISHOP SAYS



This is a symptom of boron deficiency, which can affect cauliflower in the same way. Boron is a micronutrient that is required for (among other things) lignification, or the hardening of plant cells. It may not be that your soil is deficient in boron – it could be a pH issue instead. When the soil pH is 7.5 or higher, plants can't absorb trace elements, such as boron, effectively. If your pH is 7 or less, however, it's time to apply trace elements (follow the application rate recommended on the product).

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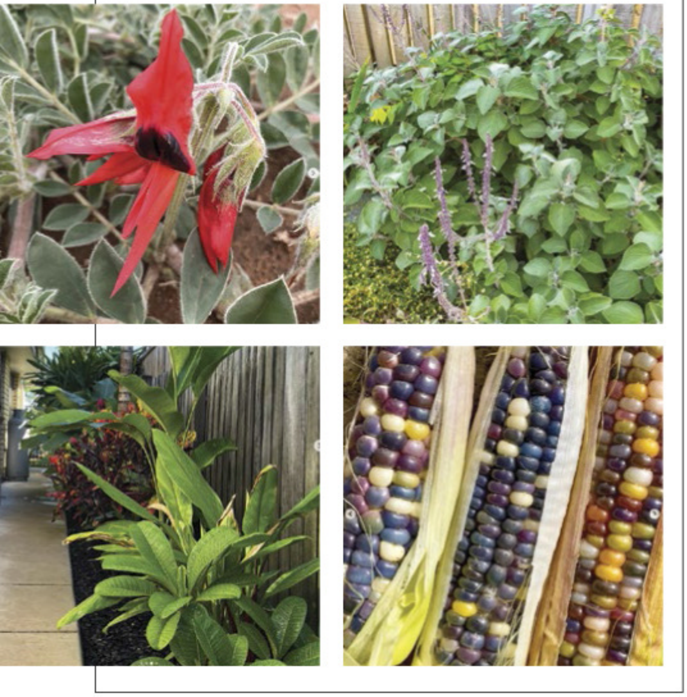
COMPETITION OPEN TO AUSTRALIAN RESIDENTS ONLY. STARTS 12/06/23 AT 00:01 (AEST) AND CLOSES 09/07/23 AT 23:59 (AEST). ONE WINNER WILL RECEIVE A BOOK PRIZE PACK, VALUED AT $295. TOTAL PRIZE POOL VALUE IS $295. ENTRIES JUDGED ON 11/07/23 AT 14:00 (AEST) AT NEXTMEDIA, LEVEL 8, 205 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ST LEONARDS NSW 2065. THE JUDGES' DECISION IS FINAL AND NO CORRESPONDENCE WILL BE ENTERED INTO. PRIZE SENT TO THE ADDRESS PROVIDED ON THE ENTRY. FULL TERMS AND CONDITIONS AT GARDENINGAUSTRALIA.COM.AU. PRIVACY POLICY AVAILABLE AT NEXTMEDIA.COM.AU. PROMOTER IS NEXTMEDIA PTY LTD; ABN 84 128 805 970; 205 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ST LEONARDS NSW 2065.

### 90-PLUS AND STILL FEEDING OUR FAMILY

My dad, Jeffrey, 91, is a die-hard gardener. He was a war evacuee from France, sent to the UK with his parents and five siblings. He learnt English and grew enough food to keep both the family and the pub they ran supplied with vegetables. It was a time of great hardship and these lessons formed his passion for growing food for us and others. Last year, he grew cucumbers for the first time. He would drop off a few dozen every week at the local post office, free of charge. We have a pantry full of pickled cucumbers, thanks to my mum Celine's ability to process a glut of whatever Dad grows! He also keeps the local roundabouts full of flowers, and he grows trees from the Golden Valley Tree Farm in Balingup and donates them to new people in town or our local schools.
*Rachel Seton, Kirup, WA*

## Your Insta posts

Clockwise from top left: **glenroy_gardens** have spotted the first bloom on their lovely Sturt's desert pea, and they are loving its vibrant colour! Meanwhile, **krunchfrog** is praising *Coleus argentatus* for its ability to thrive in clay soil; **newshoots_wellness** is excited about her latest harvest, and her Glass Gem corn has stolen the show; and **a.k.tropicals** are admiring the growth of their tropical jungle, which has created a wonderful lush privacy wall.



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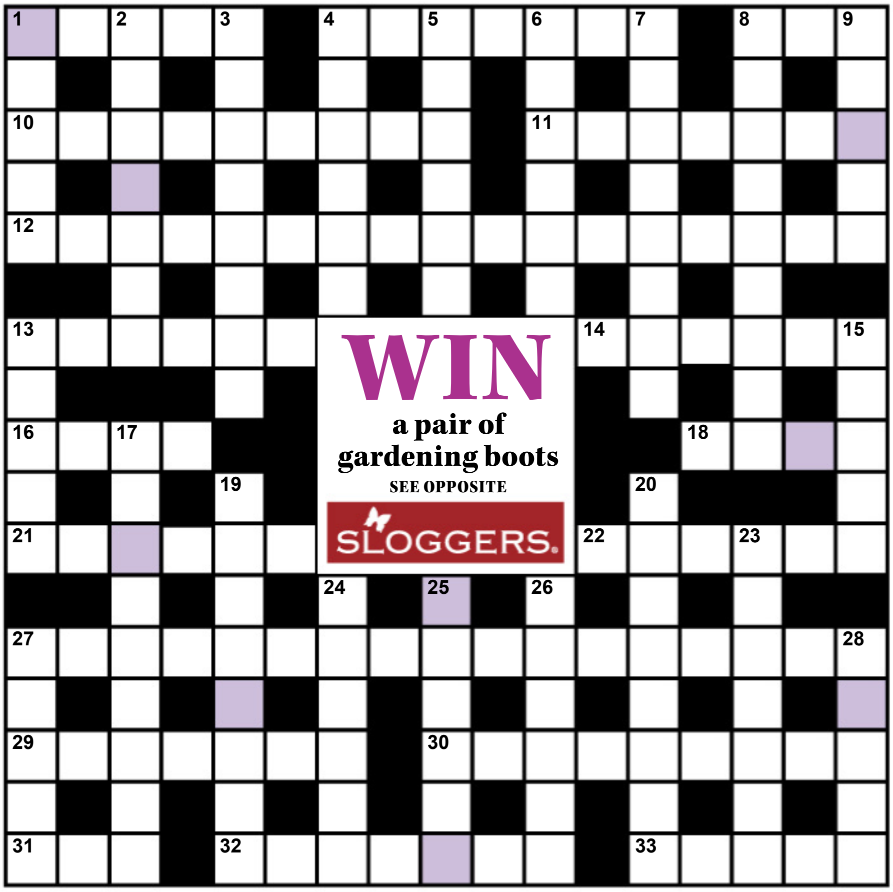
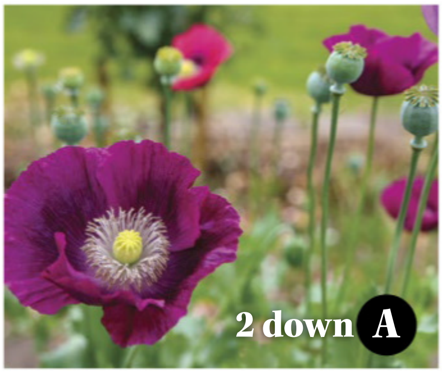
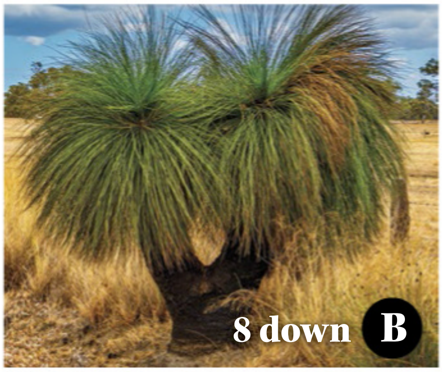
# take a break!

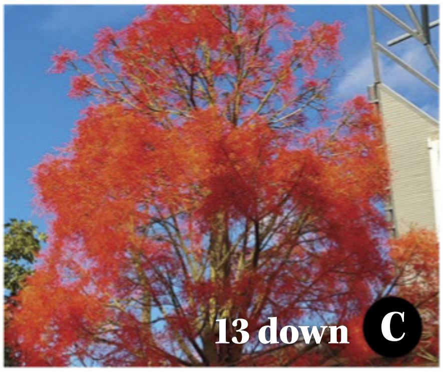
Put the kettle on – it's time to relax! Solve our puzzle to be in the running to win a pair of Sloggers boots



162 SOLUTION NEXT MONTH







## across

**1.** Tree with sugary sap (5)
**4.** A coarse lawn grass (7)
**8.** Substance used to style hair (3)
**10.** Excellent, superior (3-6)
**11.** Japanese art of flower arrangement (7)
**12.** Greenies (17)
**13.** Densely wooded area (6)
**14.** *Cinnamomum camphora* or camphor … (6)
**16.** The southern African plant … lily (4)
**18.** See 31 across
**21.** Final part (6)
**22.** The outer layer of the brain (6)
**27.** Extremely scarce (2,4,2,4,5)
**29.** Twice as much or many (7)
**30.** Plant of the genus *Pedicularis* found in wet places (9)
**31 & 18.** Beef or lamb, for example (3,4)
**32.** *Sorbus domestica* or … tree (7)
**33.** Genus of linden (5)

## down

**1.** Headdress worn by bishops and abbots (5)
**2.** Genus of poppy (7) **(Picture A)**
**3.** Marine plant with long, narrow leaves (8)
**4.** Large brown moth of southern Australia (6)
**5.** Another name for the weed *Chenopodium album* (3,3)
**6.** Bristle, awn (6)
**7.** On or to the other side of a page (8)
**8.** This iconic Australian native plant (5,4) **(Picture B)**
**9.** Covers with loose soil (5)
**13.** *Brachychiton acerifolius* or Illawarra … tree (5) **(Picture C)**
**15.** Milky juice of the rubber tree (5)
**17.** Small trees and shrubs growing beneath taller trees (9)
**19.** Huge, immense (8)
**20.** Island that lies about 19km north-west of Fremantle (8)
**23.** Clover, for example (7)
**24.** Vertical strip of unravelled fabric in a stocking, etc. (6)
**25.** Pod dried and ground to make cayenne pepper (6)
**26.** Soak in liquid without boiling (6)
**27.** Change, modify (5)
**28.** A kind of yoga (5)

CROSSWORD COMPILED BY STEVE BALL **PHOTOS** ISTOCK

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## how to enter

We have five pairs of Sloggers Outnabout Boots, each valued at $140, to give away this month. To enter, unscramble the highlighted letters in the crossword (*opposite*) and email your answer to comp@gardeningaustralia.com.au by July 2. Put 'Sloggers Outandabout Boots' in the subject line, and include your name, street address, email and daytime phone number.

## winners

**Darlac Pruning Pack (April 23)** C Kay, Goulburn, NSW; A Simpson, Doncaster East, Vic; S Way, Wondunna, Qld.

## solution June 2023 crossword

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B | R | O | M | E | L | I | A | D | ■ | N | ■ | ■ | A | C | E | R |
| A | ■ | U | ■ | R | ■ | N | ■ | I | X | O | R | A | ■ | O | ■ | E |
| L | I | N | S | E | E | D | ■ | C | ■ | R | ■ | L | A | W | N | S |
| M | ■ | C | ■ | C | ■ | O | P | T | I | M | U | M | ■ | B | ■ | T |
| ■ | G | E | N | T | O | O | ■ | U | ■ | A | ■ | O | R | A | C | H |
| ■ | R | ■ | O | ■ | P | R | I | M | U | L | A | S | ■ | N | ■ | O |
| C | A | T | N | I | P | | | | | | S | T | R | E | A | M |
| ■ | I | ■ | S | ■ | O | | | | | | P | ■ | O | ■ | ■ | E |
| ■ | N | O | T | E | S | | | | | | H | O | U | N | D | ■ |
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| C | O | W | P | A | T | | | | | | D | E | A | R | T | H |
| E | ■ | I | ■ | B | E | A | N | P | O | L | E | ■ | I | ■ | E | ■ |
| P | U | L | S | E | ■ | L | ■ | U | ■ | I | L | E | X | E | S | ■ |
| L | ■ | T | ■ | L | U | C | E | R | N | E | ■ | Y | ■ | X | ■ | U |
| A | C | I | N | I | ■ | O | ■ | I | ■ | D | A | I | S | I | E | S |
| N | ■ | N | ■ | A | S | T | E | R | ■ | E | ■ | N | ■ | S | ■ | E |
| T | O | G | A | ■ | ■ | T | ■ | I | R | R | I | G | A | T | E | D |

**June's unscrambled word:** camellia

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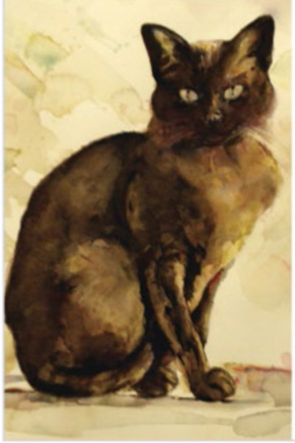

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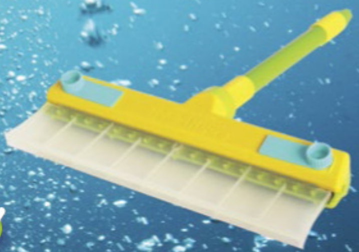

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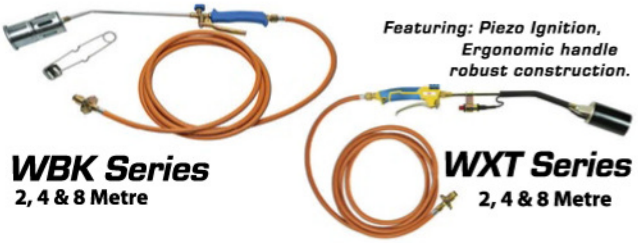
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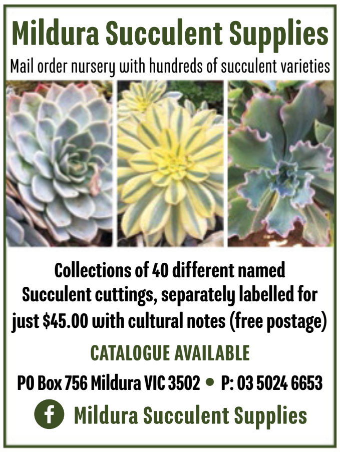

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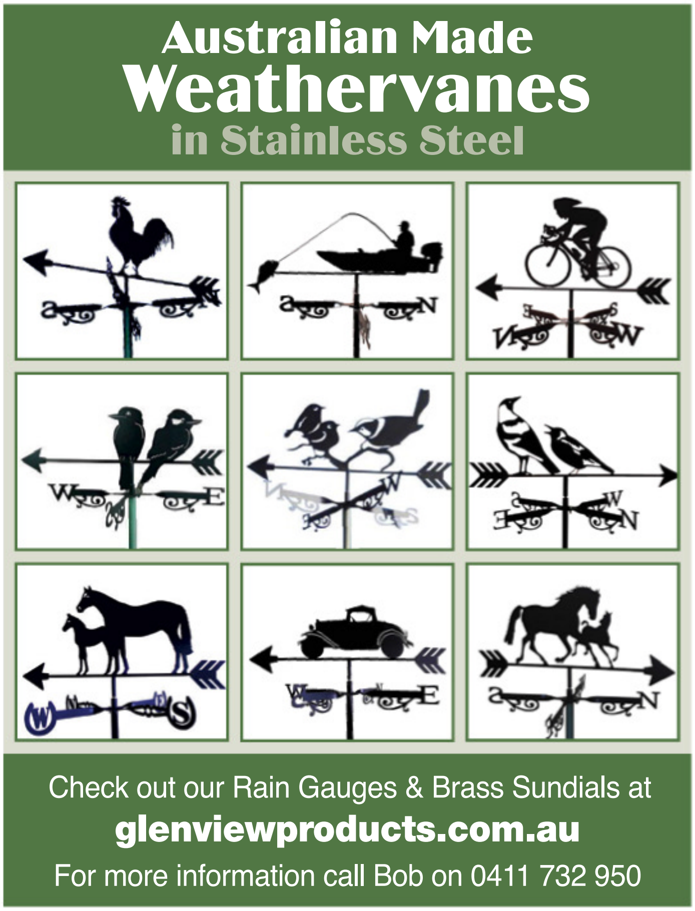

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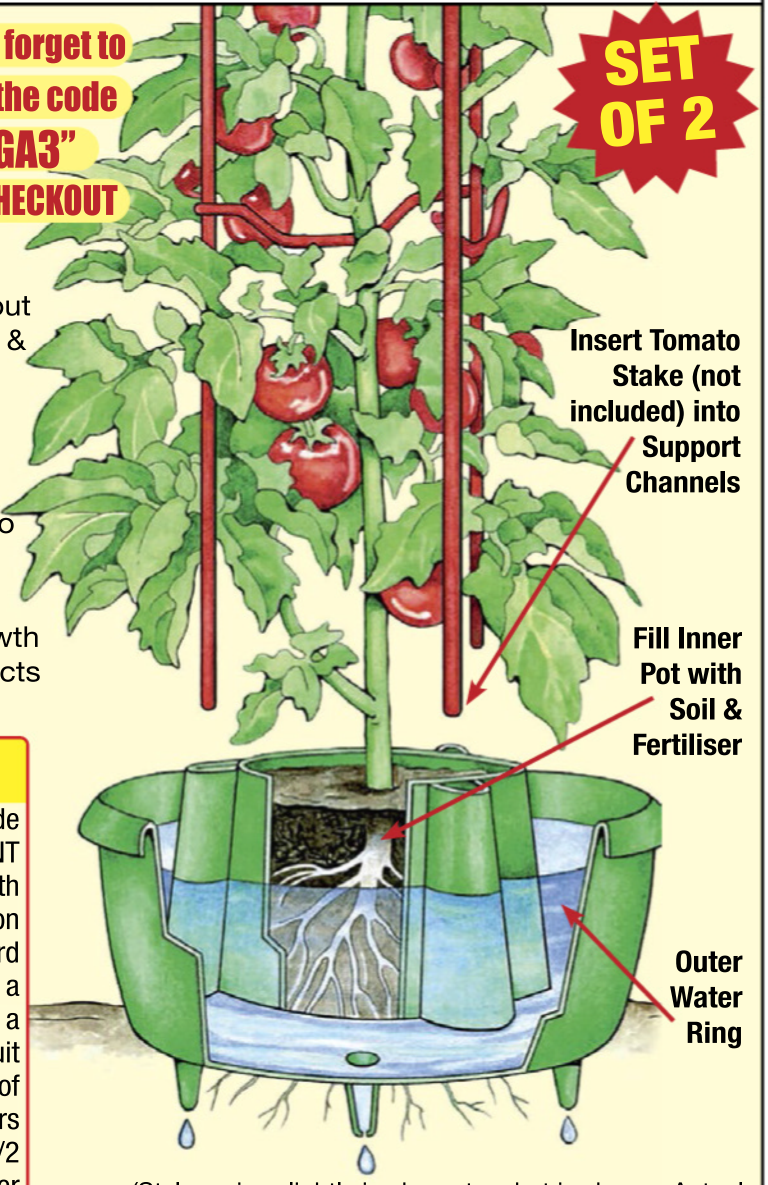
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# the big picture

Gardens are places where we can connect with and appreciate the natural world – and that's a gift we should never underestimate, writes **MICHAEL McCOY**

"I never want to hear you say that again!" came the stern command from the other side of the table, during a dinner party in an ancient English country house some 30 years ago. I had just made the point that I, as a full-time gardener in a private garden, was nothing but a luxury item.

Sitting opposite me was a clearly ambitious, articulate student of horticulture, who has since held important positions in major botanic gardens in Canada. "Do you know how much the mental health of entire cities depends on what we do?" he asked, more from irritation than a desire to persuade. "How can we ever expect anyone to respect what we do, if we don't respect it ourselves?"

It was a great moment of reckoning for me. And the point has echoed through my life ever since: gardens are not only great sources of pleasure, they're *important*. Public gardens are important, and home gardens are important.

As stated by my frustrated interlocutor, they're important for our mental health. My headspace is never left untouched, nor unimproved, by stepping out into my garden. Better still if I work out there. And better again if it involves semi-mindless physical labour that lifts my heart and my breathing rate.

Gardens are, of course, important places of connection with the natural world, including the simple provision of exposure to natural circadian rhythms, in a world saturated with artificial light and screens that mess with healthy cycles.

Time outside fuels an acknowledgement and appreciation of our natural weather systems, however hostile or benign. For several years, my wife and I used a bedroom that had no internal connection with the rest of the house, and we had to step out into the weather, momentarily, at the beginning and end of every day. I miss that.

Gardens nurture our connection with the other organisms with which we share our property – the plants and animals that call our place home, or drop by. While a walk in a nearby National Park might provide a higher integrity experience of nature, what's going on right outside our back door keeps it front-of-mind, and it's an amazing place for kids to realise that they're not only surrounded by nature but actually a part of it.

Gardens are, for many of us, important in their cultivation of our creativity and our curiosity. And, perhaps most prominently for me, gardens are important in their nurturing of a comforting and life-giving humility. Nature may leave me lots of room to play, but there's never any doubt who is in control, and who will have the final word. GA

**Michael blogs at thegardenist.com.au**

**PHOTOS** ISTOCK, VIRGINIA CUMMINS

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